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Early 19th Century Marginalization of David Walker and Nat Turner

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EARLY 19TH CENTURY MARGINALIZATION OF
DAVID WALKER AND NAT TURNER

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Taiyo W. Davis
August 2010

Accepted by:
Abel Bartley, Committee Chair
Edwin Moïse
Richard Saunders

ABSTRACT

Many authors have examined Nat Turner's Rebellion and David Walker's Appeal in the context of cause and effect. This thesis will demonstrate that similar methods of marginalization were used by the dominant white culture against David Walker and Nat Turner. Instead of accepting the stigma of religious fanaticism that both received for using religion to advocate violence, this thesis will make a defense of Turner's and Walker's use of religion to advocate violence. This thesis also asks unanswered questions and covers untouched aspects of both events which may be explored by future scholars. Moreover, this thesis asserts that more needs to be done in examining both radicals as a product of cultural diffusion between dominant and minority cultures and more needs to be done to learn overlooked lessons marginalization has caused in the study of African American history. Primary sources from the South Caroliniana at USC Columbia and the South Carolina State Archives will be used. Walker's *Appeal* will also be used as a primary source in addition to secondary sources on Walker's time as well as from other struggles of different periods and places in history. This thesis uses statistical analysis of Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts*.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my mother who implanted the value of education and humanity in me at an early age through her many acts of helping the downtrodden of our community before she left me for the inevitable and shared outcome of humankind. I thank my father for helping to direct my path toward success after my mother's death. I thank my good friend Mike Bufano for his deep conversations and advice for me. I would also like to thank my wife Tharwat Alasadi Davis who inspired me with hope for a happy life by helping me regain my innocence from my youth which I lost under the conditions of poverty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend thanks to Professor Richard Saunders whose classes provided such a plethora of information that laid the foundation of inspiration for me. I would also like to thank Professor Edwin Moise for helping me to learn to scrutinize information and think rather than memorize. I would like to thank Professor Abel Bartley for helping me to understand how an overlooked struggle by an oppressed minority could benefit all of the constituents of society in the end and also for awakening me from an apathetic slumber to realize my dreams. Thank you to Clemson University for being the platform for which I may launch my career and life.

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CHAPTER ONE: DAVID C. WALKER

Introduction

David C. Walker was an abolitionist and free African American who wrote a pamphlet titled *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* in September of 1829, which denounced slavery and racism in America and attacked American religion, Republicanism, the western economic system, etc.¹ It was stealthily distributed in three separate editions in the South using discreet channels of communications which avoided detection by the Southern ruling class. John Adams himself once said about this communication “the Negroes have a wonderful art of communicating intelligence among themselves; it will run several hundreds of miles in a week or fortnight.”²

The extent of the distribution of Walker’s pamphlet was felt by many southerners. The governor of North Carolina, John Owen, complained of the presence of Walker’s *Appeal* in Wilmington and other counties in North Carolina around 1830.³ The Magistrate of the Police in Wilmington, North Carolina believed slave plot activity

¹ Donald M. Jacobs, *Antebellum Black Newspapers* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), 149. David C. Walker is listed as contributing to buy the freedom of George Horton October 3, 1828. Most books about David C. Walker omit the middle initial C. No literature that exists today to the author’s knowledge explains what the C. stands for. Even reputable historian Peter Hinks who is the authority on David C. Walker does not use the middle initial C. nor has he expounded in any of his books what the C. stands for.

² Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 45.

³ Sally E. Hayden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 82.

immediately before Nat Turner's Rebellion was a result of Walker's *Appeal*.⁴ A tavern keeper named Jacob Cowan distributed copies before being caught in North Carolina. Magistrate of the police James F. McKee of Wilmington, North Carolina, testified in a letter of November 3, 1831 that the demeanor of blacks in North Carolina seemed to indicate the effects of the *Appeal*. He was frustrated with the inability to intercept its copies and agents of distribution. An anonymous letter intercepted by the Governor of Virginia James Floyd, asked a shopkeeper Thomas Lewis to distribute 30 copies and await more to pass around.⁵ Governor William Giles of Virginia wrote a letter indicating the difficulty ascertaining the copies in circulation, discovering the means of distribution, and arresting the agents of distribution. He felt that Walker's pamphlets were successfully distributed and had an effect on the slave population.⁶ A Magistrate in Virginia, Mr. McKee, stated the same situation in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Georgia from police reports.⁷ A letter to Governor George Gilbert of Georgia from the mayor of Savannah indicated 60 copies were seized by a preacher named Henry Cunningham, who turned the copies in to authorities.⁸ A sailor named Edward Smith was caught with Walker's pamphlets in Charleston, South Carolina and later convicted.⁹ The *Appeal* caused a great disturbance to those who wanted to perpetuate slavery in the South. *The*

⁴ Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 2nd ed. (NY: International Publishers, 1963), 82.

⁵ Peter . Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 92.

⁶ Ibid., 95-96..

⁷ Ibid., 100-106.

⁸ Ibid., 93-94.

⁹ Ibid., 100-103.

North Star claimed it was “a smooth stone which this David took up, yet it terrified a host of Goliaths.”¹⁰

Personal Life

The details of David C. Walker’s personal life are based on a dearth of sources. Walker was born around 1796, a son of a slave father and free mother in Wilmington, North Carolina. His father died a few months before his birth and later tragic irony would leave Walker dying before his own child was born. Little is known about his father. Professor Peter P. Hinks stated Walker’s father could have been Anthony Walker from Nigeria, a slave of American Revolutionary war hero Major General Robert Howe.¹¹ As a youth, Walker did not experience the brutalities of slavery, yet he learned to detest the institution of slavery, stating in his early youth:

If I remain in this bloody land, I will not live long. As true as God reigns, I will be avenged for the sorrow which my people have suffered. This is not the place for me – no no, I must leave this part of the country. It will be a great trial for me to live on the same soil where so many men are in slavery; certainly I cannot remain where I must hear their chains continually, and where I must encounter the insults of their hypocritical enslavers. Go, I must.¹²

Walker would eventually leave the South and find residence in Boston, Massachusetts in the 1820s. He opened a clothing shop at No. 42 Brattle Street which

¹⁰ Fredrick Douglass, “Sketch of the Life and Character of David Walker,” *The North Star*, July 14, 1848.

¹¹ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 12. Professor Peter P. Hinks has published several books on Walker's Appeal and is the most reputable historian on the subject.

¹² Douglass, “Sketch of the Life and Character of David Walker.”

sold used and new clothes. Walker was briefly charged with selling stolen clothing and made to appear before the court on that charge. The Executive Director of the Cape Fear Historical Institute in Wilmington North Carolina and former chairman of the Cape Fear Museum Board of Trustees, Bernhard Thuersam, stated that , “in 1828, Walker and two other used clothing dealers were tried for trafficking in stolen goods, though it is unknown if or how he was punished for the crime. Either he was part of a theft ring or encouraged thieves to ply their trade and offered good prices for the stolen goods.”¹³ However, as Professor Hinks pointed out in his book *Walker's Appeal*, Walker was acquitted of those charges.¹⁴ Walker became active in the festivals in Massachusetts honoring the end of the North Atlantic slave trade and the independence of Haiti. He also joined the African-American Masonic Lodge #459 founded by Prince Hall. This lodge was important in early fights in America against slavery, the slave trade, and racial oppression. It emphasized education of blacks, even petitioning the Massachusetts legislature in 1787 for black education programs. Professor Darryl Scriven added about Walker's membership that “not only did this organization facilitate his entrance into the higher black Bostonian society, it also gave him access to a network of black compatriots who operated in stealth and were probably complicitous in many emancipation schemes.”¹⁵ Walker would also help to fund and become editor to the first African

¹³ Bernhard Thuersam, “David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist,” 2006, Cape Fear Historical Institute, Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php> (accessed December 25, 2009).

¹⁴ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 83-84.

¹⁵ Darryl Scriven, *A Dealer of Old Clothes: Philosophical Conversations with David Walker* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 6.

American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*. It was the journal's forum of exchanging ideas with the free black middle class that led to a lot of his thoughts in his *Appeal*.

Walker also became a member of Samuel Snowden's Methodist church.¹⁶ Samuel Snowden was a friend of William Lloyd Garrison. Walker's display of courage in his *Appeal* appeared to be influenced by the preacher; Professor Hinks pointed out that Snowden was known for being more outspoken than others on slavery.¹⁷ Henry Highland Garnet, who interviewed Walker's widow, stated that Walker was frugal in life and lacked money, yet continued to help fugitives and the needy just as Snowden did.¹⁸ The Methodist church also allowed Walker access to respected members of the community and gave him access to a larger communications network in the South where numerous churches were present. This communications network also included the fact that many sailors came to Walker's clothing shop, which allowed Walker to transport his *Appeal* to the South by water. Many free African Americans were sailors during these times, because whites avoided this difficult work and African Americans provided cheap labor.

In 1828, Walker joined the Massachusetts General Colored Association (MGCA). According to Professor Hinks, the MGCA was important because of its aggressive and public promotion of the abolition of slavery, intellectual and moral uplift of blacks, and

¹⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, xxiii. The Methodist denomination in America became one of the leading religious denominations which took a stand for the religious education of blacks in America. Some African Americans favored and revered Methodism.

¹⁷ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*, 79.

¹⁸ Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 8.

promotion of unity of blacks throughout the nation.¹⁹ Walker's purpose in his *Appeal* was expressed during an address to this association when he stated, "the primary object of this institution is to unite the colored population, so far, through the United States as may be practicable and expedient, forming societies, opening, extending, and keeping up correspondence, and not withholding anything which may have the least tendency to meliorate our miserable condition...."²⁰ Unity was one of the primary concerns for Walker in his pamphlet. Professor Hinks argued that "the MGCA was the most advanced embodiment at this new impulse to organize nationally."²¹

The North Star described Walker as a man "six feet in height, slender and well proportioned. His hair was loose, and his complexion was dark."²² It is no coincidence that the date of the article in the *North Star* was July 14, 1848, the anniversary of the celebration of the end of the Atlantic slave trade in Boston, Massachusetts.²³ After he distributed his *Appeal*, Walker's response to the worries about the threat on his life by the Southern slaveholding establishment and the many pleas by his cohorts for him to flee to Canada was, "somebody must die in this cause."²⁴ Walker would in fact die under mysterious circumstances while walking toward the door of his residence. Some say he died of poison.

¹⁹ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, xxiv.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

²¹ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*, 93.

²² Douglass, "Sketch of the Life and Character of David Walker."

²³ Ibid.,

²⁴ Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, in *Four Articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, 9.

The Pamphlet

Walker's *Appeal* was divided into four articles with a preamble. It was addressed to the coloured citizens of the world, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America. His four articles focused on ignorance, perverted Christianity, slavery, and the American Colonization Society as causes for his people's wretchedness. The following is a brief analysis of the contents of the first edition of Walker's diatribe which made a whirlwind of commotion north and south of the Mason Dixon Line. It is unclear which edition was distributed the most.

Walker directly challenged the legitimacy of the American government and Republicanism by declaring that his people's conditions were worse than any other people in any other country in the past and present. He declared that his people were,

...the most wretched, degraded and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began, down to the present day, and, that, the white Christians of America, who hold us in slavery, (or, more properly speaking, pretenders to Christianity,) treat us more cruel and barbarous than any heathen nation did any people whom it had subjected, or reduced to the same condition, that the Americans (who are, notwithstanding, looking for the Millennial day) have us.²⁵

Walker also added two paragraphs before the preamble which emphasized his belief that blacks were the most wretched people in the world and that blacks needed to better their conditions on earth rather than wait for God to do it. Walker stated,

The day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth near, when we shall be enabled, in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch forth our hands to the Lord our God, but there must be a willingness on our part, for God to do these things for us, for we

²⁵ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 2.

may be assured that he will not take us by the hairs of our head against our will and desire, and drag us from our very mean, low, and abject condition.²⁶

Walker made comparisons of American slavery to other forms of slavery in the past including the Helots in Sparta, the Jews under the Egyptians, and Roman slavery,

...they tell us the Israelites in Egypt, the Helots in Sparta, and of the Roman Slaves, which last were made up from almost every nation under heaven, whose sufferings under those ancient and heathen nations, were, in comparison with ours, under this enlightened and Christian nation, no more than a cypher – or, in other words, those heathen nations of antiquity, had but little more among them than the name and form of slavery.²⁷

Walker went further by commenting about the lack of political mobility, protection, and equality of his people in America in comparison to Jewish conditions under Egyptian slavery,

...‘And Pharaoh, said unto Joseph...thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou...and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt...and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh,, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’ Now I appeal to heaven and to earth, and particularly to the American people themselves, who cease not to declare that our condition is not hard, and that we are comparatively satisfied to rest in wretchedness and misery, under them and their children. Not, indeed, to show me a coloured President, a Governor, a Legislator, a Senator, a Mayor, or an Attorney at the Bar. – But to show me a man of colour, who holds the office of Constable, or one who sits in a Juror Box, even on a case of one of his wretched brethren, throughout this great Republic!!²⁸

Walker used the example of Moses to augment his complaint about political inequality,

...‘And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, [Moses’ mother] take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages. And the woman took the child [Moses] and nursed it...And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said because I drew him out of the water’...In

²⁶ Ibid., xlvii.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Ibid., 10.

all probability, Moses would have become Prince Regent to the throne, and no doubt, in process of time but he would have been seated on the throne of Egypt.²⁹

Walker also complained about his people's inability to own land and to marry among the slave masters' population unlike the enslaved Jewish,

...‘And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went over all the land of Egypt.’ Compare the above, with the American institutions. Do they not institute laws to prohibit us from marrying among the whites?...’And Pharaoh spoke unto Joseph, saying, thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.’ I ask those people who treat us so well, Oh! I ask them, where is the most barren spot of land which they have given unto us?³⁰

Walker broke from the use of biblical sources to address Thomas Jefferson’s remarks, which Walker interpreted as placing blacks on the same level as animals in Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*,

I call upon the professing Christians, I call upon the philanthropist, I call upon every tyrant himself, to show me a page of history, either sacred or profane, on which a verse can be found, which maintains, that the Egyptians heaped the insurmountable insult upon the children of Israel, by telling them that they were not of the human family. Can the whites deny this charge? Have they not, after having reduced us to the deplorable condition of slaves under their feet, held us up as descending originally from the tribes of Monkeys or Orang-Outangs [orangatangans]?...Has Mr. Jefferson declared to the world, that we are inferior to the whites, both in endowments of our bodies and our minds?³¹

²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁰ Ibid., 10-11.

³¹ Ibid., 12. See also Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 230. Jefferson stated, “Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the white, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species. The circumstances of superior beauty, is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man?”

After focusing on the conditions of enslavement of the Jews, Walker addressed the slavery of the Helots comparing the motives for their enslavement and blacks in America while simultaneously emphasizing the destruction of the American slave's family structure,

...the sufferings of the Helots among the Spartans, were somewhat severe, it is true, but to say that theirs, were as severe as ours among the Americans, I do most strenuously deny – for instance, can any man show me an article on a page of ancient history which specifies, that, the Spartans chained, and handcuffed the Helots, and dragged them from their wives and children, children from their parents, mothers from their suckling babes, wives from their husbands, driving them from one end of the country to the other?...Further – The Spartans or Lacedaemonians, had some frivolous pretext, for enslaving the Helots, for they (Helots) while being free inhabitants of Sparta, stirred up an intestine commotion, and were, by the Spartans subdued, and made prisoners of war. Consequently, they and their children were condemned to perpetual slavery.³²

Walker commented on his people's innocence and stated his opinion on the cause for their enslavement which differed from the Helots',

I have been for years troubling the pages of historians, to find out what our fathers have done to the white Christians of America, to merit such condign punishment as they have inflicted on them, and do continue to inflict on us their children. But I must aver, that my researches have hitherto been to no effect. I have therefore, come to the immoveable conclusion, that they (Americans) have, and do continue to punish us for nothing else, but for enriching them and their country. For I cannot conceive of anything else. Nor will I ever believe otherwise, until the Lord shall convince me.³³

Walker's discussion of Roman slavery, in his quest to prove his people's enslavement was the worst, included a response to Thomas Jefferson's defense of American slavery. Jefferson stated, "we know that among the Romans, about the Augustan age especially, the condition of their slaves was much more deplorable than

³² Ibid., 15-16.

³³ Ibid., 16.

that of the blacks on the continent of America.”³⁴ Jefferson also stated that Roman slaves were put to death after the murder of their master unlike American slavery. Walker’s refutation was that death was preferable to American slavery describing the conditions of Roman slavery as a “cypher” compared to the former. Walker also urged throughout his *Appeal* for his people to choose death rather than be inured and accept slavery. Walker stated that by accepting slavery rather than choosing death, they were passing the curse upon their children.³⁵ Walker also stated that Roman slavery allowed slaves to purchase their freedom and manumitted slaves to hold political office,

...had I rather not die, or be put to death, than to be a slave to any tyrant, who takes not only my own, but my wife and children’s lives by the inches?... but the slaves among the Romans. Everybody who has read history, knows, that as soon as a slave among the Romans obtained his freedom, he could rise to the greatest eminence in the State, and there was no law to hinder a slave from buying his freedom. Have not the Americans instituted laws to hinder us from obtaining our freedom? Read the laws of Virginia, North Carolina, &c: have not the Americans instituted laws to prohibit a man of colour from obtaining and holding any office whatever, under the government of the United States of America?”³⁶

Another area of concern for Walker and a controversial stance by Walker was his interpretation of religion in America. Walker wanted to use religion to unite and inspire his people, yet had to come up with an explanation as to why Christians were the culprits of his people’s oppression. Walker’s explanation was that his people’s oppressors were pretenders to this religion. Walker defended Christianity as a religion while attacking European and American Christianity throughout his pamphlet.

³⁴ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 152.

³⁵ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 287-88.

³⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 18-20. Walker may have thought of the Latin poet Horace who rose to a military officer in Marcus Julius Brutus' army and seemed to be on a path toward a political career before the rise of Octavian and Mark Antony.

Walker claimed that Europe had corrupted Christianity which eventually had made its way to America,

...Moses handed a dispensation of his divine will, to the children of Israel after they had left Egypt for Canaan or of Promise, who through hypocrisy, oppression, and unbelief, departed from the faith. – He then, by his apostles, handed a dispensation of his, together with the will of Jesus Christ, to the Europeans in Europe, who, in open violation of which, have made merchandise of us, and it does appear as though they take this very dispensation to aid them in their infernal depredations upon us. Indeed, the way in which religion was and is conducted by the Europeans and their descendants, one might believe it was a plan fabricated by themselves and the devils to oppress us. But Hark! My master has taught me better than to believe it – he has taught me that this gospel as it was preached by himself and his apostles remains the same, notwithstanding Europe has tried to mingle blood and oppression with it.³⁷

Walker scolded American preachers of Christianity because of their failure as the moral leaders of the communities and the effect it had upon other Christian Americans. Walker allowed his audience to identify the main culprit in the perpetuation of corruption in American Christianity and the treatment of his people,

The wicked and ungodly, seeing their preachers treat us with so much cruelty, they say: our preachers, who must be right, if anybody are, treat them like brutes, and why cannot we? – They think it is no harm to keep them in slavery and put the whip to them, and why cannot we do the same! – They being preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, if it were any harm, they would surely preach against their oppression and do their utmost to erase it from the country; not only in one or two cities, but one continual cry would be raised in all parts of this confederacy, and would cease only with the complete overthrow of the system of slavery, in every part of the country. But how far the American preachers are from preaching against slavery and oppression...³⁸

Walker vehemently opposed restrictions on teaching Christianity to slaves. Walker made comparisons of the proselytizing of the religions practiced by Pagans, Jews, and Muslims to American Christianity,

³⁷ Ibid., 37.

³⁸ Ibid., 40-41.

The Pagans, Jews and Mahometians try to make proselytes to their religions, and whatever human beings adopt their religions they extend to them their protection. But Christian Americans, not only hinder their fellow creatures, the Africans, but thousands of them will absolutely beat a coloured person nearly to death if they catch him on his knees, supplicating the throne of grace.³⁹

Walker also condemned the hypocrisy of how Christian Americans prevented his people from learning the word of God yet offered their religion abroad. Walker augmented the claim that his people were treated worse than any other people because they were prevented from learning the word of God while Americans made efforts to Christianize strangers outside its borders,

Yes, I have known small collections of coloured people to have convened together, for no other purpose than to worship God Almighty, in spirit and in truth, to the best of their knowledge; when tyrants, calling themselves patrols, would also convene and wait almost in breathless silence for the poor coloured people to commence singing and praying to the Lord our God, as soon as they had commenced, the wretches would burst in upon them and drag them out and commence beating them as they would rattle-snakes – many of whom, they would beat so unmercifully, that they would hardly be able to crawl for weeks and sometimes months. Yet the American ministers send out missionaries to convert the heathen, while they keep us and our children sunk at their feet in the most abject ignorance and wretchedness that ever a people was afflicted with since the world began.⁴⁰

In his third edition, Walker made the controversial declaration that blacks would Christianize the world instead of whites. Walker claimed American Christianity's failure to proselytize others was because God would not allow them to be successful until they did justice to his people. Walker's preceding complaints were premises for his assertion that Christian Americans were violating the Bible by deterring his people from learning

³⁹ Ibid., 39. Walker makes a very interesting point here. The difference between the practice of religion between the Spanish in South and Central America in comparison to Europeans in North America according to Professor Paula Heusinkveld of the Spanish department at Clemson University, was that Europeans in North America were more reluctant than the Spanish to intermarry and spread their religion upon the indigenous.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 40.

the word of God, based on the distinction of their skin color, and thus pretenders to the religion,

How can the preachers and people of America believe the Bible? Does it teach them any distinction on account of a man's colour? Hearken, Americans! To the injunctions of our Lord and Master, to his humble followers. 'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth.' 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' I declare, that the very face of these injunctions appear to be of God and not of man. They do not show the slightest degree of distinction.⁴¹

Walker explained that avarice, pride, and prejudice prevented Europeans and Americans from seeing their open violation of God's word which he predicted would lead to their ruin,

But the Americans, having introduced slavery among them, their hearts have become almost seared, as with an hot iron, and God has nearly given them up to believe a lie in preference to the truth!!! And I am awfully afraid that pride, prejudice, avarice and blood, will, before long prove the final ruin of this happy republic, or land of liberty!!!!⁴²

One of the most important themes which was overlooked in the past, until professors Peter P. Hinks' and Darryl Scriven's recent works, was Walker's intent to destroy the apathy and ignorance amongst his people. Professor Hinks commented upon Walker's intentions:

...the biggest problem Walker addressed was the one of the individual psyche: how to transform the consciousness of individual blacks mixed in the paradox of powerlessness amid power into personalities unified around the awareness of their own strength, integrity, and freedom. ...No one else more directly confronted the problems of how to motivate a people to pursue freedom and power who had become accustomed to not having it.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴² Ibid., 45.

⁴³ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, xvi and 199.

Walker's main purposes in his pamphlet wasn't only violence but his real purpose was to attack the ignorance and apathy of his people. Walker stated, "but against all accusations which may or can be preferred against me, I appeal to heaven for my motive in writing – who knows that my object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in the Republican Land of Liberty!!!!!"⁴⁴ The importance of the above quote is recognized by Professor Hinks who wrote a book on Walker's *Appeal* with the title taken from words in this very quote, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*. A book review by Claude F. Oubre about Professor Hinks' book *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* stated that while most references to Walker focus on the potential to incite insurrection, Oubre agreed with Professor Hinks that Walker was more concerned with informing blacks and uplifting their character.⁴⁵ Ignorance and apathy were Walker's primary targets and comprised the biggest challenge for him to overcome in order to mobilize his people. Throughout Walker's *Appeal* his most emphasized complaint was the treachery of his people against each other which he felt resulted from ignorance,

Ignorance and treachery one against the other – a groveling servile and abject submission to the lash of tyrants, we see plainly, my brethren, are not natural elements of the blacks, as the Americans try to make us believe; but these are misfortunes which God has suffered our fathers to be enveloped in for many ages, no doubt in consequence of their disobedience to their Maker, and which do, indeed, reign at this time among us, almost to the destruction of all other principles: for I must truly say, that ignorance, the mother of treachery and deceit, gnaws into our very vitals.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 4-5.

⁴⁵ Claude F. Oubre, "To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 39, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 109-10.

⁴⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 23-25.

In the above paragraph, it is clear Walker identified three distinct challenges of his people: “ignorance, treachery, and a groveling and servile submission to the lash of tyrants.” Walker gave a detailed description of this treachery amongst his people which a witness may see in the South and North,

He may see there, a son take his mother, who bore almost the pains of death to give him birth, and by the command of a tyrant, strip her as naked as she came into the world, and apply the cow-hide to her, until she falls a victim to death in the road! He may see a husband take his dear wife, not unfrequently in a pregnant state, and perhaps far advanced, and beat her for an unmerciful wretch, until his infant falls a lifeless lump at her feet!...my observer may see fathers beating their sons, mothers their daughters, and children their parents, all to pacify the passions of unrelenting tyrants. He may also, see them telling news and lies, making mischief one upon another. These are some of the productions of ignorance, which he will see practiced among my dear brethren, who are held in unjust slavery and wretchedness, by avaricious and unmerciful tyrants, to whom, and their hellish deeds, I would suffer my life to be taken before I submit...He may see some of my brethren in league with tyrants, selling their own brethren into hell upon earth...my observer may see some of those ignorant and treacherous creatures sneaking about in the large cities, endeavoring to find out all strange coloured people, where they work and where they reside, asking them questions, and trying to ascertain whether they are runaways or not, telling them, at the same time, that they always have been, are, and always will be, friends to their brethren....whom scandalously delivered into the hands of our natural enemies!!!!!!⁴⁷

Walker’s preoccupation with the treachery of his people was evident before the writing of his pamphlet. Walker stated in a speech given to the Massachusetts General Colored Association on December 19, 1828,

“Mr. President, - I cannot but congratulate you, together with my brethren on this highly interesting occasion, the first semi-annual meeting of this Society. When I reflect upon the many impediments through which we have had to conduct its affairs, and see, with emotions of delight, the present degree of eminency to which it has arisen, I cannot, sir, but be of the opinion, that an invisible arm must have been stretched out on our behalf. From the very second conference, which was by us convened, to agitate the proposition respecting this society, to its final consolidation, we were by some, opposed, with an avidity and zeal, which, had it been on the opposite side, would have done great honor to themselves. ..Yea, had our opponents their way, the very notion of such an institution might have been obliterated from our minds. How strange it is, to see men of sound sense, and of tolerably good judgment, act so diametrically in opposition to their interest..we see, to our sorrow, in the very midst of us,

⁴⁷ Ibid.

a gang of villains, who, for the paltry sum of fifty or a hundred dollars, will kidnap and sell into perpetual slavery their fellow creatures! And, too. Of one of their fellow sufferers, whose miseries are a little more enhanced by the scourges of a tyrant, would abscond from his pretended owner, to take a little recreation, and unfortunately fall in their way, he is gone! Brethren and fellow sufferers, I ask you, in the name of God, and of Jesus Christ, shall we suffer such notorious villains to rest peaceably among us? Will they not take our wives and little ones, more particularly our little ones...May God open our eyes on these children of the devil and enemies of good!⁴⁸

Walker claimed his people's continuous oppression resulted from this treachery. Walker also provided an example of how he expected his people to behave when he stated in reverence to Moses' rejection of an offer by the Pharaoh of Egypt,

...but he had rather suffer shame, with the people of God, than to enjoy pleasures with that wicked people for a season. O! that the coloured people were long since of Moses' excellent disposition, instead of courting favor with, and telling news and lies to our natural enemies, against each other – aiding them to keep our hellish chains of slavery upon us. Would we not long before this time, have been respectable men, instead of such wretched victims of oppression as we are? Would they be able to drag our mothers, our fathers, our wives, our children and ourselves, around the world in chains and handcuffs as they do, to dig up gold and silver for them and theirs? This question, my brethren, I leave for you to digest; and may God Almighty force it home to your hearts.⁴⁹

Walker also predicted that his own people would betray him. Traitors who would choose immediate financial rewards over the cause of their own people by refusing to scrutinize the very system they profited on and traitors who would become jealous over the attention of his efforts when they thought of themselves as the leaders of the abolition movement. Walker predicted,

I am fully aware, in making this appeal to my much afflicted and suffering brethren, that I shall not only be assailed by those whose greatest earthly desires are, to keep us in abject ignorance and wretchedness, and who are of the firm conviction that Heaven has designed us and our children to be slaves and beasts of burden to them and their children. I say, I do not only expect to be held up to the public as an ignorant, impudent and restless disturber of the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 85-89.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

public peace, by such avaricious creatures, as well as a mover of insubordination – and perhaps put in prison or to death, for giving a superficial exposition of our miseries, and exposing tyrants. But I am persuaded, that many of my brethren, particularly those who are ignorantly in league with slaveholders or tyrants, who acquire their daily bread by the blood and sweat of their more ignorant brethren – and not a few of those too, who are too ignorant to see an inch beyond their noses, will rise up and call me cursed – Yea, the jealous ones among us will perhaps use more abject subtlety, by affirming that this work is not worth perusing, that we are well situated, and there is no use in trying to better our condition, for we cannot.⁵⁰

Walker's *Appeal* was not only directed toward slaves but especially the free blacks or middle class of black society who had more freedom to understand and distribute his thoughts. One of the most important additions in the second edition was that Walker placed responsibility for distributing his pamphlet on the shoulders of the free black class stating, "some of my brethren, who are sensible, do not take an interest in enlightening the minds of our more ignorant brethren respecting this book, and in reading it to them, just as though they will not have either to stand or fall by what is written in this book."⁵¹ Walker had more concern of betrayal from this class. Walker knew that it was this class on which the success of his intentions depended and he did his best to convince them they should cooperate with his efforts,

Men of colour, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my appeal designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore to cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren, and to do your utmost to enlighten them – go to work and enlighten them – go to work and enlighten your brethren! – Let the Lord see you doing what you can to rescue them and yourselves from degradation. Do any of you say that you and your family are free and happy, and what have you to do with the wretched slaves and other people? So can I say, for I enjoy as much freedom as any of you, if I am not quite as well off as the best of you. Look into our freedom and happiness, and see of what kind they are composed!! They are of the lowest kind – they are the very drags!...If any of you wish to know how free you are, let one of you start and go through the southern and western States of this country, and unless you travel as a slave to a white man (a servant is a slave to the man whom he serves) or have your free papers, (which if you are not careful they will get from you) if they do not take you up and put you in jail, and if you cannot give

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., xlix.

good evidence of your freedom, sell you into eternal slavery, I am not a living man: or any man of colour, immaterial who he is, or where he came from, if he is not the fourth from the negro race!! (as we are called) the White Christians of America will serve him the same they sink him into wretchedness and degradation forever while he lives. And yet some of you have the hardihood to say that you are free and happy!⁵²

Walker complained of the ignorance of his people which he defined as his people's lack of fervor for obtaining higher achievements. Walker believed that instead of his people evaluating their accomplishments by comparing their lives to slaves, they should compare it to the whites' achievements. Walker spoke to a shoe cleaner who responded to Walker's complaints of the economic immobility of his people, "I am completely happy!!! I never want to live any better or happier than when I can get a plenty of boots and shoes to clean!!!" Walker responded,

Oh! How can those who are actuated by avarice only, but think, that our Creator made us to be an inheritance to them forever, when they see that our greatest glory is centered in such mean and low objects?...My objections are, to our glorying and being happy in such low employments; for if we are men, we ought to be thankful to the Lord for the past, and for the future. Be looking forward with thankful hearts to higher attainments than wielding the razor and cleaning boots and shoes. The man whose aspirations are not above, and even below these, is indeed, ignorant and wretched enough. I advanced it therefore to you, not as a problematical, but as an unshaken and forever immovable fact, that your full glory and happiness, as well as all other coloured people under Heaven, shall never be fully consummated, but with the entire emancipation of your enslaved brethren all over the world. You may therefore, go to work and do what you can to rescue, or join in with tyrants to oppress them and yourselves, until the Lord shall come upon you all like a thief in the night.⁵³

Walker also defined ignorance as the lack of aspirations for a better education amongst his people. Walker declared that his people's children were taught how to copy without understanding grammar rules, they were unable to answer general questions about geography, and their pronunciation was terrible. As with the shoe cleaner, Walker entered

⁵² Ibid., 30-31.

⁵³ Ibid., 31-32.

into a conversation with one of his brethren who bragged of his son's education, the father said, "I know that our people are very ignorant but my son has a good education, I spent a great deal of money on his education. He can write as well as any white man, and I assure you that no one can fool him..."⁵⁴ Walker replied,

Said I, what else can your son do, besides writing a good hand? Can he post a set of books in a mercantile manner? Can he write a nice piece of composition in prose or verse? To these interrogations he answered in the negative. Said I, did your son learn, while he was at school, the width and depth of English Grammar? To which he also replied in the negative, telling me his son did not learn those things. Your son, said I, then, has hardly any learning at all – he is almost as ignorant, and more so, than many of those who never went to school one day in all their lives. My friend got a little put out, and so walking off, said that his son could write as well as any white man. Most of the coloured people, when they speak of the education of one among us who can write a neat hand, and who perhaps knows nothing but to scribble and puff pretty fair on a small scrap of paper, immaterial whether his words are grammatical, or spelt correctly, or not; if it only looks beautiful, they say he has as good an education as any white man – he can write as well as any white man, &c. The poor, ignorant creature, hearing this, he is ashamed, forever after, to let any person see him humbling himself to another for knowledge but going about trying to deceive those who are more ignorant than himself, he at last falls an ignorant victim to death in wretchedness. I pray the Lord undeceive my ignorant brethren, and permit them to throw away pretensions, and seek after the substance of learning.⁵⁵

Education was a very important topic in Walker's pamphlet. Walker's additions in the second edition focused on the false myths whites spread about blacks such as being unable to learn. He also pointed out the contradiction that while his people were stereotyped with the inability to learn, whites prevented them from learning by force.⁵⁶ Walker believed that prejudiced whites prevented his people from obtaining equitable education with whites because this would make his people want more than their present conditions in life and it would also inspire his people to assert their manhood with pride and refuse to be oppressed as they were,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

⁵⁵ Ibid..

⁵⁶ Ibid., xlvii.

I have examined school boys and young men of colour in different parts of the country, in the most simple parts of Murray's English Grammar, and not more than one in thirty was able to give a correct answer to my interrogations...And, I say it, he[anyone] will hardly find (in this enlightened day, and in the midst of this charitable people) five in one hundred, who, are able to correct the false grammar of their language...Here is a fact, which I this very minute take from the mouth of a young coloured man, who has been to school in this state (Massachusetts) nearly nine years, and who knows grammar this day, nearly as well as he did the day he first entered the schoolhouse, under a white master. This young man says: 'My master would never allow me to study grammar.' I asked him why? 'The school committee,' said he 'forbid the coloured children learning grammar – they would not allow any but the white children to study grammar.'⁵⁷

Walker believed that white restriction of religious and secular teaching to his people created apathy and ignorance so, "...that we might be the better and more obedient slaves."⁵⁸ Walker felt "they have kept us in so much ignorance, that many of us know no better than to fight against ourselves, and by that means strengthen the hands of our natural enemies, to rivet their infernal chains of slavery upon us and our children."⁵⁹ Walker's solution to the wrongs done upon his people was education. It is interesting to note that while Walker believed that education would make his people assert their manhood and want more, he also predicted that education would make the lion lay with the lamb in forgiveness and toleration,

I say, let us reason; had you not better take our body, while you have it in your power, and while we are yet ignorant and wretched, not knowing but a little, give us education, and teach us the pure religion of our Lord and Master, which is calculated to make the lion lay down in peace with the lamb, and which millions of you have beaten us nearly to death for trying to obtain since we have been among you, and thus at once, gain our affection while we are ignorant?⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., 34-36.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

It seems that Walker was not the only abolitionist that believed this. Immediately after the Turner Rebellion, Governor James Floyd received a letter from an anonymous individual under the pen name of Nero addressed from Boston . In it was a diatribe against slavery. It said that the Turner Rebellion was organized and coordinated by unseen conspirators, and most importantly, the first line of the letter gives details into the thinking of abolitionists like Walker during this time. The letter stated

...oppression and revenge are the two prominent traits in the human character; and as long as the former exists, the latter is justifiable. It is the business of education and improvement to do away with these evils; but so long as man shall task, abuse, and act the tyrant over his fellow man, may revenge ever be fondly cherished, and spiritedly encouraged by the injured; nor let the dastard scruples of conscience unnerve the muscular arm of the oppressed, till Revenge be fully glutted,. Revenge possesses some properties in common with love. We cannot enjoy either in full fruition unless the object of affection, or vengeance be conscious of being loved, or punished. Thus far I have moralized in order to let you know the motive of this communication.⁶¹

Hinks stated about the letter that, “this seemingly cryptic response is actually highly suggestive of a common mental outlook and connections, religious and otherwise, existing among blacks over this wide geographical area.”⁶² Hinks meant that the thoughts of Walker appeared to be more of a norm than people may be inclined to believe. Therefore Nero and Walker felt education was like Frederick Douglass’ example of a safety valve for preventing the flow of violence like a running spigot. Walker and Nero felt education would teach their people to employ their minds rather than violence in fighting for their freedom and equality. Thus they would become more effective and

⁶¹ Ira Berlin, “After Nat Turner: A Letter From the North,” *The Journal of Negro History* 55, No. 2 (April 1970), 145.

⁶² Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*, 167.

dangerous to the slave establishment. The South would do everything to deter this from happening. Walker stated in his pamphlet about education,

There is a great work for you to do, as trifling as some of you may think of it. You have to prove to the Americans and the world, that we are MEN, and not *brutes*, as we have been represented, and by millions treated. Remember, to let the aim of your labours among your brethren, and particularly the youths, be the dissemination of education and religion.⁶³

Walker used sarcasm at his oppressors

How many millions souls of the human family have the blacks beat nearly to death, to keep them from learning to read the Word of God, and from writing. And telling lies about them, by holding them up to the world as a tribe of TALKING APES, void of INTELLECT!!!! incapable of LEARNING, &c.⁶⁴

Walker also explained why he felt education was important using a quote by Mr. Elias B. Caldwell, Esq. of the District of Columbia, from his speech about blacks, “if they must remain in their present situation, keep them in the lowest state of degradation and ignorance. The nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes, the better chance do you give them of possessing their apathy.” Walker reacted, “Here I pause to get breath, having labored to extract the above clause of this gentleman’s speech, at that colonizing meeting. I presume that everybody knows the meaning of the word ‘apathy,’ – if any do not, let him get Sheridan’s Dictionary, in which he will find it in full.”⁶⁵ In Sheridan’s dictionary which Walker refers to, the word apathy is defined vaguely as “exception from passion.” When one looks up passion, the definition is “any effect caused by external agency; violent commotion of the mind; anger; zeal, ardor; love; eagerness; emphatically,

⁶³ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 32.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 54.

the last suffering of the Redeemer of the world.”⁶⁶ As we see here with Sheridan’s definition, the list of words to describe passion which is the word used to define apathy is precisely what Walker wanted his people to behave like. He wanted his people to understand the word of the “last suffering of the redeemer of the world”. He wanted his people to react against the “external agency” of slavery and racism. He wanted his people to react with a “violent commotion of the mind; anger, zeal, ardor; love; eagerness;” to demonstrate they were men deserving of the natural rights given to them by God. As we see here, Walker was not thinking of apathy in a general or abstract concept, instead apathy had precise symptoms according to Sheridan’s dictionary. Those symptoms are similar to “a groveling servile and abject submission to the lash of tyrants.”

Another important theme in Walker’s pamphlet was unity. In an address to the Massachusetts General Colored Association on December 19, 1828, Walker stated that “the primary object of this institution, is, to unite the colored population, so far, through the United States of America, as may be practicable and expedient, forming societies, opening, extending, and keeping up correspondence, and not withholding anything which may have the least tendency to meliorate our miserable condition...”⁶⁷ Although Walker complained of the disunity amongst his people he also set a positive tone to inspire his people, arguing that unity was possible and could be achieved. He linked the achievements of his people to those of the African nation of Egypt, instilled pride in his people, and emphasized the accomplishments which unity brought to his people. Walker

⁶⁶ Thomas Sheridan, *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (London: William Strahan for J. Dodsley, C. Dilly, and J. Wilkie, 1780), Look up the words apathy and passion. No page numbers.

⁶⁷ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 85-89.

claimed Hannibal as the military hero of his African people, who nearly conquered the progenitors of their oppressors at the gates of Rome yet failed because of disunity. Walker emphasized that disunity was the same determinant of their progenitors' defeat and consequent enslavement then and now,

When we take a retrospective view of the arts and sciences – the wise legislators – the Pyramids, and other magnificent buildings – the turning of the channel of the river Nile, by the sons of Africa or of Ham, among whom learning originated, and was carried thence into Greece, where it was improved upon and refined. Thence among the Romans, and all over the then enlightened parts of the world, and it has been enlightening the dark and benighted minds of men from then, down to this day. I say, when I view retrospectively, the renown of that once mighty people, the children of our great progenitor I am indeed cheered. Yea further, when I view that mighty son of Africa, HANNIBAL, one of the greatest generals of antiquity, who defeated and cut off so many thousands of the Romans or murderers, and who carried his victorious arms, to the very gate of Rome, and I give it as my candid opinion, that had Carthage been well united and had given him good support, he would have carried that cruel and barbarous city by storm. But they were disunited, as the coloured people are now, in the United States of America, the reason our natural enemies are enabled to keep their feet on our throats.⁶⁸

Walker predicted that God would give his people another Hannibal and demanded that they support him. This statement is important because it not only gave pride in the potential military prowess of his people but simultaneously granted hope. It also attempted to convince his people that the next slave rebellion in the South could possibly be led by a Hannibal and they should be ready to grant their support to him,

O my suffering brethren! Remember the division and consequent sufferings of Carthage and of Hayti. Read the history particularly of Hayti, and see how they were butchered by the whites, and do you take warning. The person whom God shall give you, give him your support and let him go his length, and behold in him the salvation of your God. God will indeed, deliver you through him from your deplorable and wretched condition under the Christians of America. I charge you this day before my God to lay no obstacle in his way, but let him go.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 21-22.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 22.

Walker declared “do not two hundred and eighty years [of] very intolerable sufferings teach us the actual necessity of a general among us?”⁷⁰

Walker also knew that his people’s behavior gave ammunition for those that claimed his people’s inferiority made them unfit for freedom, consequently furthering his people’s suffering as a whole,

How can, Oh! How can those enemies but say that we and our children are not of the HUMAN FAMILY, but were made by our Creator to be an inheritance to them and theirs forever?...How can the slaveholders but say that they can bribe the best coloured person in the country, to sell his brethren for a trifling sum of money, and take that to confirm them in their avaricious opinion, that we were made to be slaves to them and their children?⁷¹

Walker commented on Jefferson’s statement that those who advocated abolition were embarrassed by the behavior of his people. Walker’s point in the following paragraph was to strike in the hearts of his people that their apathy, treachery, and ignorance were providing the fuel for the justification of their conditions by such people as Jefferson,

Now I ask you candidly, my suffering brethren in time, who are candidates for the eternal worlds, how could Jefferson but have given the world these remarks respecting us, when we are so submissive to them, and so much servile deceit prevail among ourselves – when we so meanly submit to their murderous lashes, to which neither the Indians nor any other people under Heaven would submit? No, they would die to a man, before they would suffer such things from men who are no better than themselves, and perhaps not so good. Yes, how can our friends but be embarrassed, as Mr. Jefferson says, by the question, ‘What further is to be done with these people?’ For while they are working for our emancipation, we are by our treachery, wickedness and deceit, working against ourselves and our children – helping ours, and the enemies of God, to keep us and our dear little children in their infernal chains of slavery!!!⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., 85-89.

⁷¹ Ibid., 28.

⁷² Ibid., 28-30. See also *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Jefferson stated, “This unfortunate difference of color, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question, ‘What further is to be done with them?’ join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only.” 155.

Walker realized that his people needed to help those white philanthropists who sympathized with them by asserting their manhood, rather than depend on those philanthropists alone for the amelioration of their condition. Walker understood what Thomas Paine did when Paine wrote in a letter from Paris to a friend in Philadelphia concerning anti-slavery efforts,

...we must push this matter [Negro slavery] further on your side of the water. I wish that a few well instructed could be sent among their brethren in bondage; for until they are enabled to take their own part, nothing will be done.⁷³

Walker stated in an address to the MGCA on December 19, 1828,

But some may even think that our white brethren and friends are making such mighty efforts, for the amelioration of our condition, that we may stand as neutral spectators of the work. That we have very good friends yea, very good, among the body, perhaps none but a few of those who have ever read at all will deny; and that many of them have gone, and will go, all lengths for our good, is evident, from the very works of the great, the good, and the godlike Granville Sharpe [sic]. Wilberforce, Lundy, and the truly patriotic and lamented Mr. Ashmun, late colonial agent of Liberia, who, with a zeal which was only equaled by the goodness of his heart has lost his life in our cause, and a host of others too numerous to mention: a number of private gentlemen too, who, though they say but little, are nevertheless engaged for good. Now, all of those great, and indeed, good friends whom God has given us I do humbly, and very gratefully acknowledge. But, that we should co-operate with them, as far as we are able by uniting and cultivating a spirit of friendship and of love among us, is obvious, from the very exhibition of our miseries, under which we groan.⁷⁴

Walker used Jefferson's statements to inspire his people to refute and prove incorrect the assumptions of their oppressors,

For my own part, I am glad Mr. Jefferson has advanced his positions for your sake; for you will either have to contradict or confirm him by your own actions, and not by what our friends have said or done for us; for those things are other men's labours, and do not satisfy

⁷³ Herbert Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 43.

⁷⁴ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 85-89.

the Americans, who are waiting for us to prove to them ourselves, that we are MEN, before they will be willing to admit the fact.⁷⁵

Another unrecognized aspect of Walker's pamphlet was his interpretation of western history as one of continuous avarice. Walker made a huge criticism of western history with a long paragraph in his preamble which identified slavery as the root cause of many western nations' revolutions and civil wars. It must be noted here that Walker wrote his pamphlet at a time in history in which revolution was spreading widely, which probably influenced his interpretation of how economic exploitation caused these revolutions. Walker directly mentioned the French Revolution which ended around 1799. The Haitian Revolution, which resulted in a black-run country after slaves revolted against their French masters definitely influenced Walker. Walker also mentioned the Greek War for Independence. Herbert Aptheker noted in *American Negro Slave Revolts* that the time shortly preceding and during Walker's was "a period of world-wide revolutionary upheaval, such as had not been seen for a generation."⁷⁶ Walker stated,

And as the inhuman system of slavery, is the source from which most of our miseries proceed, I shall begin with that curse to nations, which has spread terror and devastation through so many nations of antiquity, and which is raging to such a pitch at the present day in Spain and in Portugal. It had one tug in England, in France, and in the United States of America; yet the inhabitants thereof, do not learn wisdom, and erase it entirely from their dwellings and from all with whom they have to do. The fact is, the labour of slaves comes so cheap to the avaricious usurpers, and is (as they think) of such great utility to the country where it exists, that those who are actuated by sordid avarice only, overlook the evils, which will as sure as the Lord lives, follow after the good. In fact, they are so happy to keep us in ignorance and degradation, and to receive the homage and the labour of the slaves, they forget that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, having his ears continually open to cries, tears and groans of his oppressed people; and being a just and holy Being will at one day appear fully in behalf of the oppressed, and arrest the progress of the avaricious oppressors; for although the destruction of the oppressors God may not effect by the oppressed, yet the Lord our God will bring other destructions upon

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁶ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 265.

them— for not unfrequently will he cause them to rise up one against the other, to be split and divided, and to oppress each other, and sometimes to open hostilities with sword in hand. Some may ask, what is the matter with this united and happy people? – Some say it is the cause of political usurpers, tyrants, oppressors, &c. But has not the Lord an oppressed and suffering people among them? Does the Lord condescend to hear cries and see their tears in consequence of oppression? Will he let the oppressors rest comfortably and happy always? Will he not cause the very children of the oppressors to rise up against them, and oftentimes put them to death? ‘God works in many ways his wonders to perform.’ I will not here speak of the destructions which the Lord brought upon Egypt, in consequence of the oppression and consequent groans of the oppressed – of the hundreds and thousands of Egyptians whom God hurled into the Red Sea for afflicting his people in their land – of the Lord’s suffering people in Sparta or Lacedaemon, the land of the truly famous Lycurgus – nor have I time to comment upon the cause which produced the fierceness with which Sylla usurped the title, and absolutely acted as dictator of the Roman people – conspiracy of Cataline – the conspiracy against, and murder of Caesar in the Senate house – the spirit with which Marc Antony made himself master of the commonwealth – his associating Octavius and Lipidus with himself in power – their dividing the provinces of Rome among themselves – their attack and defeat, on the plains of Phillipi, of the last defenders of their liberty, (Brutus and Cassius) – the tyranny of Tiberius, and from him to the final overthrow of Constantinople by the Turkish Sultan, Mahomed II A.D. 1453...all persons who are acquainted with history, and particularly the Bible, who are not blinded by the God of this world, and are not actuated solely by avarice – who are able to lay aside the prejudice long enough to view candidly and impartially, things as they were, are, and probably will be – who are willing to admit that God made man to serve Him alone, and that man should have no other Lord or Lords but Himself – that God Almighty is the sole proprietor or master of the WHOLE human family, and will not on any consideration admit of a colleague, being unwilling to divide his glory with another – and who can dispense with prejudice long enough to admit that we are men, notwithstanding our improminent noses and woolly heads, and believe that we feel for our fathers, mothers, wives, and children, as well as the whites do for theirs. – I say, all who are permitted to see and believe these things, can easily recognize the judgments of god among the Spaniards. Though others may lay the cause of the fierceness with which they cut each other’s throats, to some other circumstance, yet they who believe that God is a God of justice, will believe that SLAVERY is the principal cause.⁷⁷

Walker believed that the greed or avarice for cheap labor and slavery caused God to punish through civil wars and revolutions, those western nations who forced it upon innocent people. Walker’s use of numerous Western examples focused on the consistent desire of western nations for cheap labor and slavery. This interpretation was based on observations using an economic heuristic which would have labeled Walker a

⁷⁷ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 6-7. In Article one of Walker's Appeal. Walker stated, "the world knows that slavery as it existed among the Romans, (which was the primary cause of their destruction) was, comparatively speaking, no more than a cipher, when compared with ours under the Americans. "16.

Communist sympathizer in the 1950s. In addition, contrary to some western preachers' assertions that God supported the western system using its success in the world as proof, Walker declared that the conflicts in which western nations became engulfed were in fact punishments imposed by God because of this economic exploitation. Walker attacked avarice as the reason for the perpetuation of slavery, resulting in divine punishment, as if it was something inherent within the history of Western culture and economy. Walker said that the Europeans' avarice caused the dispensation from Moses' hands to be corrupted which made its way to America and that avarice was the common reason Western nations had civil wars and revolutions.

Another overlooked topic is Walker's attention to American media; he noticed the lack of attention to the sufferings of his people. He used a Bible verse to respond to the silence upon slavery and racism which he observed in the American media, "Our dear Redeemer said, 'therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in the darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.'⁷⁸ Professor Hinks added in his annotations of *Walker's Appeal* that Walker was using the biblical passage Matthew 10:26-7 which states, "so have no fear of them; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops."⁷⁹ In other words, Walker wanted his people to begin countering the propaganda of silence in America about the persecution of his people by proclaiming

⁷⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 124, note 73.

what was kept in the closet should be brought out in the light, on top of roof-tops, so everyone could hear and see. Most importantly, in the third edition Walker predicted that the true character of Americans hiding behind the false claims of Christianity and Republicanism would be exposed.⁸⁰ Walker mocked the response by the South to intercept his pamphlet, “Why, I thought the Americans proclaimed to the world that they are a happy, enlightened, humane and Christian people, all the inhabitants of the country enjoy equal Rights!! America is the asylum for the oppressed of all nations.”⁸¹ Walker felt that the American people were minimizing the sufferings of his people rather than being honest. Walker stated,

They have newspapers and monthly periodicals, which they receive in continual succession, but on the pages of which, you will scarcely ever find a paragraph respecting slavery, which is ten thousand times more injurious to this country than all the other evils put together; and which will be the final overthrow of its government, unless something is very speedily done; for their cup is nearly full.⁸²

Walker continued,

The preachers and people of the United States form societies against Free Masonry and Intemperance, and write against the Sabbath breaking, Sabbath mails, Infidelity, &c.&c. But the fountain head, compared with which, all those other evils are comparatively nothing, and from the bloody and murderous head of which, they receive no trifling support, is hardly noticed by the Americans. This is a fair illustration of the state of society in this country – it shows what a bearing avarice has upon a people, when they are nearly given up by the Lord to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, in consequence of afflicting their fellow creatures.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid., xlv-xlvi.

⁸¹ Ibid., xlv.

⁸² Ibid., 41-42.

⁸³ Ibid., 43.

Walker believed that violence by slaves and the consequent legislation as a response to slave rebellion by the south would be noticeable for others to see the problem with the American experiment called Republicanism in the face of media silence,

They have hitherto passed among some nations, who do not know anything about their internal concerns, for the most enlightened, humane, charitable, and merciful people upon earth, when at the same time they treat us, the (coloured people) secretly more cruel and unmerciful than any other nation upon earth – It is a fact, that in our Southern and Western States, there are millions who hold us in chains or in slavery, whose greatest object and glory, is centered in keeping us sunk in the most profound ignorance and stupidity, to make us work without remunerations for our services. Many of whom if they catch a coloured person, whom they hold in unjust ignorance, slavery and degradation, to them and their children, with a book in his hand, will beat him nearly to death. I heard a wretch in the State of North Carolina said, that if any man would teach a black person whom he held in slavery, to spell, read or write, he would prosecute him to the very extent of the law. – Said the ignorant wretch, ‘a Nigar, ought not to have any more sense than enough to work for his master.’ May I not ask to fatten the wretch and his family? – These and similar cruelties these Christians have been for hundreds of years inflicting on our fathers and us in the dark, God has however, very recently published some of their secret crimes on the housetop, that the world may gaze on their Christianity and see of what kind it is comprised. – Georgia for instance, God has completely shown to the world, the Christianity among its white inhabitants. A law has recently passed the Legislature of the republican State (Georgia) prohibiting all free or slave persons of colour, from learning to read or write; another law has passed the republican House of Delegates, (but not the Senate) in Virginia, to prohibit all persons of colour, (free and slave) from learning to read or write, and even to hinder them from meeting together in order to worship our Maker!!!!!! – Now I solemnly appeal, to the most skillful historians in the world, and all those who are mostly acquainted with the histories of the Antideluvians and of Sodom and Gomorrah, to show me a parallel of barbarity, Christians!! Christians!!! I dare you to show me a parallel of cruelties in the annals of Heathens or of Devils, with those of Ohio, Virginia and of Georgia – know the world that these things were before done in the dark, or in a corner under a garb of humanity and religion. God has however, taken of the fig leaf covering, and made them expose themselves on the housetop. I tell you that God works in many ways his wonders perform, he will unless they repent, make them expose themselves enough more yet to the world.- See the acts of Christians in Florida, South Carolina, and Kentucky.⁸⁴

While Walker was frustrated by his people’s lack of violence against slavery, he also declared his disgust how American propaganda went further than silence by creating negative stereotypes to the world about his people being violent,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 55-56.

Now, what can be more aggravating, than for Americans, after having treated us so bad, to hold us up to the world as such great throat-cutters? It appears to me as though they are resolved to assail us with every species of affliction that their ingenuity can invent. See the African Repository and Colonial Journal, from its commencement to the present day – see how we are through the medium of that periodical, abused and held up by the Americans, as the greatest nuisance to society, and throat-cutters in the world.⁸⁵

His attacks on whites for the defamation of his people's character with false stereotypes intensified in the third edition. An interesting footnote within Walker's pamphlet indicated Walker's respect for propaganda, international opinion, and the value of antagonizing a government into actions contrary to its propaganda. Walker felt Americans were concerned about the image of Republicanism portrayed abroad. Walker understood the relationship between the symbolism of Republicanism to countries abroad and its economic effects on America's pockets commenting on the biblical passage about Demetrius the Silversmith who feared Paul destroying the image of Diana because it affected his business. Demetrius was concerned that Paul would destroy the symbolism of Diana's statue to the people surrounding Ephesus. The geographical region which existed during Demetrius' time would be from Rome, Italy to modern day Israel. Walker also understood that the success of abolition in the northern United States and in England would leave the South in a precarious and possibly volatile position with other nations. John Quincy Adams stated in his diary on January 10, 1821, that the abolitionist development in England "may prove an earthquake upon this continent."⁸⁶ Walker claimed that the concern of the Southern government over the distribution of his

⁸⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁸⁶ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 265-266.

pamphlet would be a result of worrying about their image abroad or because they had the spirit of Demetrius the Silversmith,

Why do slave-holders or tyrants of America and their advocates fight so hard to keep my brethren from receiving and reading my book of Appeal to them? – is it because they treat us so well? – Is it because we are satisfied to rest in Slavery to them and their children? – Is it because they are treating us like men, by compensating us all over this free country!! For our labours? – But why are the Americans so very fearfully terrified respecting my Book? – Why do they search vessels, &c. when entering the harbours of tyrannical states, to see if any of my books can be found, for fear that my brethren will get them to read. Why, I thought the Americans proclaimed to the world that they are a happy, enlightened, humane and Christian people, all the inhabitants of the country enjoy equal Rights!! America is the Asylum for the oppressed of all nations!!! Now I ask the Americans to see the fearful terror they labor under for fear that my brethren will get my book and read it – and tell me if their declaration is true – viz, if the United States of America is a Republican Government? – Is this not the most tyrannical, unmerciful, and cruel government under Heaven – not excepting the Algerines, Turks and Arabs? – I believe if any candid person would take the trouble to go through the Southern and Western sections of this country, and could have the heart to see the cruelties inflicted by these Christians on us, he would say, that the Algerines, Turks, and Arabs treat their dogs a thousand times better than we are treated by the Christians. – But perhaps the Americans do their very best to keep my Brethren from receiving and reading my Appeal for fear they will find it in an extract which I made from their Declaration of Independence, which says, ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,’ &c.&c.&c. – If the above are not the causes of alarm among the Americans, respecting my book, I do not know what to impute it to, unless they are possessed of the same spirit with which Demetrius the Silversmith was possessed – however, that they may judge whether they are of the same avaricious and ungodly spirit with that man, I will give here an extract from the Acts of Apostles, chapter xix, - verses 23,24,25,26,27. ‘And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth; moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but most throughout Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands: so that not only this craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Dianna should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.’ I pray you Americans of the North and South America, together with the whole European inhabitants of the world, (I mean Slave-holders and their advocates) to read and ponder over the above verses in your minds, and judge whether or not you are of the infernal spirit with that Heathen Demetrius the Silversmith: In fine I beg you to read the whole chapter through carefully.⁸⁷

Chapter 19 of Acts, verse 35 stated that when the town clerk calmed the people of Ephesus down upon the arrival of Paul and his company, he reassured them, “Ye men of

⁸⁷ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 75-76.

Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not...the great goddess Diana and of the *image* [my emphasis] which fell down from Jupiter?”⁸⁸ *Image* or symbolism was important in both stories. In the first half of the paragraph Walker stated that the South was attempting to intercept his pamphlet and American media kept silent about the oppression of his people because of the concern over his pamphlet destroying their image of Republicanism in America. This image was one of equal rights, the land of the oppressed, and better respect for human rights than other countries. In the second part of the paragraph, Walker stated if it was not the first cause, it was because they were of the same spirit as Demetrius the Silversmith. The subtlety in Walker’s attacks is sometimes misunderstood in his pamphlet. The story of Demetrius the Silversmith is about the concern of the people of Ephesus led by Demetrius over Paul destroying the *image* [my emphasis] or symbolism of the statue of Diana to all the people of Asia and consequently affecting their pockets. Thus Walker did not really make an either or clause, but a subtle insult claiming that either Americans were worried over his pamphlet because of its potential to destroy its image abroad, perhaps it would affect their pockets. Either motive leaves Americans concerned over Walker’s pamphlet destroying the image of Republicanism by exposing the lies which were portrayed to the world.

Walker was also one of the main contributors to black nationalism in America. This black nationalism was unique in that it meant unity of all African American as a distinct people, yet blacks and whites would be citizens of America instead of Africa.

⁸⁸ *Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments in the King James Version* (Lake Wylie, SC: Christian Heritage Publishing Company Inc., n.d.), under Acts of the Apostles: Chapter 19, 890-91. n.d..

Walker augmented this new form of nationalism by attacking the false philanthropy of the American Colonization Society. The American Colonization Society was a foundation which transported free blacks from America to Africa. Carla L. Peterson of the University of Maryland stated that Walker's *Appeal* was, "maybe the first expression of black nationalism in this country."⁸⁹ Walker was not the originator of this black nationalism though. In one of the paragraphs in his work, an annotation was included within *Walker's Appeal* by Professor Hinks which explained that the "Baltimorean" mentioned by Walker was William Watkins who was a free black resident of Baltimore that wrote under the pen "the colored Baltimorean" and attacked the American Colonization Society.⁹⁰ This seems to have been one of the inspirations for Walker to speak against the American Colonization Society. Walker stated in the introduction of this section,

...my dearly beloved brethren: - This is a scheme on which so many able writers, together with that very judicious coloured Baltimorean, have commented, that I feel my delicacy about touching it. But as I am compelled to do the will of my master, I declare, I will give you my sentiments upon it.⁹¹

Another huge influence in Walker's stance against the American Colonization Society's plan and for black nationalism was the Reverend Richard Allen, founder of the first African-American church. Bishop Allen complained in a letter to *Freedom's Journal* in reference to the Colonization Plan of the contradiction of his people being expected to Christianize the people in Africa while they are not allowed to learn the word of God in

⁸⁹ *Slavery and the Making of America: Volume 2, Liberty in the Air*, DVD. Directed by Dante James (New York: Ambrose Video Publishing, 2004).

⁹⁰ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 122.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

America, how his people could educate Africans when they were not educated themselves in America. He stated his opinion that the real intention of the Society was removing the free black population from contact with the slave population. He also stated that riches and opportunity were in America not Africa, and his people's services in building this nation gave them the rightful claim to reside on it. Bishop Allen's exact words were,

Dear Sir, I have been for several years trying to reconcile my mind to the Colonizing of Africans in Liberia, but there have always been, and there still remain great and insurmountable objections against the scheme. We are an unlettered people, brought up in ignorance, not one in a hundred can read or write, not one in a thousand has liberal education; is there any fitness for such to be sent into a far country, among heathens, to convert or civilize them, when they themselves are neither civilized or Christianized? See the great bulk of the poor, ignorant Africans in this country, exposed to every temptation before them: all for the want of their morals being refined by education and proper attendance paid unto them by their owners, or those who had the charge of them. It is said by the Southern slave-holders, that the more ignorant they can bring up the Africans, the better slaves they make, ("go and come.") Is there any fitness for such people to be colonized in a far country to be their own rulers? Can we not discern the project of sending the free people of colour away from their home country? Is it not for the interest of the slave-holders to select the free people of colour out of the different states, and send them to Liberia? Will it not make their slaves uneasy to see free men of colour enjoying liberty? It is against the law in some of the Southern States, that a person of colour should receive an education, under a severe penalty. Colonizationists speak of America being first colonized; but is there any comparison between the two? America was colonized by as wise, judicious, and educated men as the world afforded. William Penn did not want for learning, wisdom, or intelligence. If all the people in Europe and America were as ignorant and in the same situation as our brethren, what would become of the world? Where would be the principle or piety that would govern the people? We were stolen from our mother country, and brought here. We have tilled the ground and made fortunes for thousands, and still they are not weary of our services. But they who stay to till the ground must be slaves. Is there not land enough in America, or "corn enough in Egypt?" Why should they send us into a far country to die? See the thousands of foreigners emigrating to America every year: and if there be ground sufficient for them to cultivate, and bread for them to eat, why would they wish to send the first tillers of the land away? Africans have made fortunes for thousands, who are yet unwilling to part with their services; but the free must be sent away, and those who remain, must be slaves. I have no doubt that there are many good men who do not see as I do, and who are for sending us to Liberia; but they have not duly considered the subject - they are not men of colour. - This land which we have watered with our tears and our blood, is now our mother country, and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds and the gospel is free.⁹²

⁹² Ibid., 59-60.

One of Walker's main contributions to African American history was to convince his people and abolitionists that the American Colonization Society's plans were contrary to the interests of his people. Walker used quotes by constituents of the American Colonization Society, Henry Clay and Elias B. Caldwell, from Dr. Jesse Torrey's *Essays on Morals, and the Diffusion of Knowledge* throughout his pamphlet in his attempts to prove his accusations. Walker revealed that the colonization scheme was,

...a plan to get those of the coloured people, who are said to be free, away from among those of our brethren whom they unjustly hold in bondage, so that they may be enabled to keep them the more secure in ignorance and wretchedness, to support them and their children, and consequently they would have the more obedient slaves, they will have intercourse together, and, of course, the free will learn the slaves bad habits, by teaching them that they are MEN, as well as other people, and certainly ought and must be FREE.⁹³

Although it is not clear if Walker understood the comments of the people he used in his pamphlet in order to prove that the Colonization Plan was a trick, he did feel that some of its members wanted to remove the free black population from the slaves and to keep his people in ignorance. It is also apparent that as Walker attacked Henry Clay as a racist, southerners were also attacking Clay for being an abolitionist. However, Walker did feel that some of the members who supported the Colonization scheme did so out of a naïve but honest desire to help his people. Nevertheless, many of the Colonization Society's members felt that Walker's people needed to be transported to Africa because they could not survive in America. Walker used Caldwell's statements as an explanation of why the free among them were banished to Africa through the American Colonization Society's plan,

⁹³ Ibid., 49.

The more you improve the condition of these people, the more you cultivate their minds, the more miserable you make them in their present state. You give them a higher relish for those privileges which they can never attain, and turn what we intend for a blessing into a curse...if they must remain in their present situation, keep them in the lowest state of degradation and ignorance. The nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes, the better chance do you give them of possessing their apathy...surely, Americans ought to be the last people on earth, to advocate such slavish doctrines, to cry peace and contentment to those who are deprived of the privileges of civil liberty, they who have so largely partaken of its blessings, who know so well how to estimate its value, ought to be among the foremost to extend it to others.⁹⁴

Walker commented on the Caldwell's statement declaring that,

The real sense and meaning of...Mr. Caldwell's speech is, get the free people of colour away to Africa, from among the slaves, where they may at once be blessed and happy, and those who we hold in slavery, will be contented to rest in ignorance and wretchedness, to dig up gold and silver for us and our children. Men have indeed got to be so cunning, these days, that it would take the eye of Solomon to penetrate and find them out.⁹⁵

Walker used the words of another member of the American Colonization Society, John Randolph of Roanoke, who in a speech before the Society commented on the security of the nation threatened by blacks,

It had been properly observed by the Chairman, as well as by the gentlemen from this District (meaning Messrs. Clay and Caldwell) that there was nothing in the proposition submitted to consideration which in the smallest degree touches another very important and delicate question, which ought to be left as much out of view as possible, (Negro Slavery.) There is no fear that this proposition would alarm the slave-holders; they had been accustomed to think seriously of the subject. – There was a popular work on agriculture, by John Taylor of Carolina [Caroline], which was widely circulated, and much confided in, in Virginia. In that book, much read because coming from a practical man, this description of people, [referring to us half free ones] were pointed out as a great evil. They had indeed been held up as the greater bug-bear to every man who feels an inclination to emancipate his slaves, not to create in the bosom of his country so great a nuisance. If a place could be provided for their reception, and a mode of sending them hence, there were hundreds, nay thousands of citizens who would, by manumitting their slaves, relieve themselves from the cares attendant on their possession. The great slaveholder was frequently a sentry at his own door – bound to stay on the plantation to see that his slaves were properly treated, &c...so

⁹⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 54-55.

far from being connected with the abolition of slavery, the measure proposed would prove one of the greatest securities to enable the master to keep in possession his own property.⁹⁶

The book by John Taylor which Randolph referred to may be very informative of the mindsets of some of the constituents of the American Colonization Society since Taylor was one of if not the most respected member during his time.⁹⁷ In it Taylor stated about the free negro class,

It is however unnecessary to prove what every agriculturalist in the slave states experimentally knows, namely, that his operations are greatly embarrassed, and his efforts retarded, by circumstances having the class of free negroes for their cause. The only remedy is to get rid of it. It is substantial, not balloon morality, by which questions ought to be considered; whether a severance of the free negro class from the whites and slaves, will benefit or injure either of the three classes; or whether it will benefit or injure a majority of them as constituting one body? The situation of the free negro class is exactly calculated to force it in every species of vice. Cut off from most of the rights of citizens, and from the allowances of slaves, it is driven into every species of crime for subsistence; and destined to a life of idleness, anxiety and guilt. The slaves more widely share in its guilt, than its fraudulent acquisitions. They owe to it the perpetual pain of repining at their own condition by having an object of comparison before their eyes, magnified by its idleness and thefts with impunity, into a temptation the most alluring to slaves; and will eventually owe to it the consequences of their insurrections. The whites will reap also a harvest of consequences from the free negro class, and throughout their degrees of rank suffer much in their morals from the two kinds of intercourse maintained with it. If vice is misery, this middle class is undoubtedly placed in a state of misery itself, and contributes greatly to that of the other two. The interest of virtue, therefore, as well as sound policy, is allied with the interest of agriculture, in recommending the proposed severance. If it should not benefit every individual of the three classes, as is probable, no doubt can exist of its benefiting a majority of each, and a very great majority of the whole. No injury, but much good to the whites and slaves is perceivable in the measure. And relief from the disadvantages of inferior rights, from the necessity of living in a settled course of vice, and from the dangers portended to it by a commotion among the slaves, promises great benefits to the free negro class itself from a severance.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid., 57-58. The work mentioned in this paragraph by John Randolph was *The Arator: Being a Series of Agricultural Essays, Practical and Political*. Professor Peter P. Hinks did not mention this within his book, *Walker's Appeal*.

⁹⁷ The American Colonization Society, *The African Repository* (Washington: William H. Moore, 1862), 38 and 277. Taylor of Caroline's book *The Arator* was one of the first books in the defense of slavery and agriculture in the South. He was also instrumental in state's rights and may have had an influence on John C. Calhoun. He was a member of the American Colonization Society and served as a Virginia Senator and member of the House of Delegates.

⁹⁸ John Taylor of Caroline, *The Arator: Being a Series of Agricultural Essays, Practical and Political*, 4th ed. (Petersburg, VA: Whitworth and Yances for John M. Carter, 1818), 41-42.

Taylor described the free blacks as a problem that was,

...one of a magnitude sufficient to affect deeply the prosperity of agriculture, and threaten awfully the safety of the country; I allude to the policy of introducing by law into a society, a race, or a nation of people between the masters and slaves, having rights extremely different from either, called free negroes and mulattoes. It is not my intention to consider the peril to which this policy exposes the safety of the country, by the excitement to insurrection, with which it perpetually goads the slaves, the channels for communication it affords, and the reservoir of recruits it provides. I shall only observe, that it was this very policy, which first doomed the whites, and then the mulattoes themselves, to the fate suffered by both in Saint Domingo; and which contributes greatly to an apprehension so often exhibited. Being defined by experience in that country, and by expectation in this, it is unnecessary for me to consider the political consequences of this policy.⁹⁹

Taylor also believed that emancipating the slaves could lead to the extermination of the white race. Taylor felt that free blacks and slaves had to be separated. In addition, he felt that integration would allow the ability of blacks to “extirpate” the whites. His solution was that,

...if England and America would erect and foster a settlement of free negroes in some fertile part of Africa, it would soon subsist by its own energies. Slavery might then be re-exported, and philanthropy gratified by a slow reanimation of the virtue, religion and liberty of the negroes, instead of being again afflicted with the effects of her own rash attempts suddenly to change human nature.¹⁰⁰

Taylor continued,

Slaves are docile, useful, and happy, if they are well managed; and if their docility, utility and happiness are not obstructed by the circumstances adverted to in the last number. – Knowledge manages ignorance with great ease, whenever ignorance is not used as an instrument by knowledge against itself. But our religious and philosophical quixottes have undertaken to make ignorance independent of knowledge. They propose to bestow a capacity of liberty, and rule on an extreme degree of ignorance, when the whole history of mankind announces, that far less degree possess no such capacity. One would suspect, except for the integrity of these divines and philosophers, that disguised in the garb of religion and philosophy striving to disengage a mass of ignorance from those who now direct it, for the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 47.

purpose of appropriating it for themselves. Free it cannot be. It must become the slave of superstition, cunning or ambition, in some form. And what is still worse, when thrown upon the great national theatre to be scrambled for, that interest which shall gain the prize, will use it to oppress other branches of knowledge. In its hands the blacks will be more enslaved than they are at present; and the whites, in pursuit of an ideal freedom for them, will create some vortex for ingulping the remnant of liberty left in the world, and obtain real slavery for themselves. Under their present masters the negroes will enjoy more happiness, and even more liberty, than under a conqueror or a hierarchy. Slavery to an individual is preferable to slavery to an interest or faction. The individual is restrained by his property in the slave, and susceptible of humanity. An interest or faction is incapable of both. Did a hierarchy or paper system ever shed tears over its oppressions, or feel compunctions for its exactions? On the contrary, joy swells with the fruit of guilt; and the very conscience, which abhors the secret guillotine, used to cut out a neighbor's purse, and transfer it to its own pocket, without difficulty retains the contents. Thus men imagine that they have discovered a way to elude the justice of God, whose denunciations have overlooked chartered corporations, and are only leveled against individuals. – The crime, they suppose, is committed by a body politick, and scripture having exhibited no instance of one of these artificial bodies being consigned to the region of punishment, their oppressions, however, atrocious, are considered as a *casus omnisus*, and as affording a mode for fattening the body with crimes and frauds, without hurting the soul.¹⁰¹

Taylor looked upon the black race as a possible insurgency for America and was adamantly opposed to giving them rights as he stated, “for where will the rights of black sans culottes stop?”¹⁰²

Walker not only attacked the philanthropy and intentions of the American Colonization Society but those of his own people who agreed to be removed from America back to Africa, “what our brethren could have been thinking about, who have left their native land and home and gone away to Africa, I am unable to say. This country is as much ours as it is the whites, whether they will admit it now or not, they will see and believe it by and by.”¹⁰³ Speaking in reference to the anti-black riots in Ohio in 1829, Walker urged his people to remain in America regardless of the tribulations,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 85-86.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 58.

Let them commence their attack upon us as they did on our brethren in Ohio, driving and beating us from our country, and my soul for theirs, they will have enough of it. Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites – we have enriched it with our blood and tears.¹⁰⁴

At the end of his *Appeal* Walker gave a solution to produce co-existence between blacks and whites in order to avoid utter destruction of American society, “throw away your fears and prejudices then, and enlighten us and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you, and tell us now no more about colonization, for America is as much our country, as it is yours.”¹⁰⁵ Walker left the responsibility of creating co-existence upon Christian whites and predicted the possible wrath of God,

The Americans may say or do as they please, but they have to raise us from the condition of brutes to that of respectable men, and to make a national acknowledgement to us for the wrongs they have inflicted on us. As unexpected, strange, and wild as these propositions may to some appear, it is no less a fact, that unless they are complied with, the Americans of the United States, though they may for a little while escape, God will yet weigh them in balance, and if they are not superior to other men, as they have represented themselves to be, he will give them wretchedness to their very heart’s content.¹⁰⁶

In the end of his *Appeal* Walker used the Declaration of Independence to reiterate that all men were created equal and included lines of religious poems (Professor Hinks stated that these religious poems could not be found in the Common Prayer Book or Wesley’s Collection as Walker attributed to in his *Appeal*).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 67. “The race riots of Cincinnati, Ohio in 1829 caused many African Americans to flee to Canada. Riots in Ohio would continue for a long time against African Americans. Anti-black respectability through the activities of the Cincinnati Colonization Society, which since its founding in 1826, had attracted the city’s most prominent citizens.” The riots were sparked when Cincinnati officials made Negroes pay a \$500 bond to guarantee good behavior. When the Negroes petitioned for a legislative reprieve, riots by white mobs began. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 107.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 73.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Thy presence why withdraw'st, Lord?
Why hid'st thou now thy face,
When dismal times of deep distress
Call for thy wonted grace?

The wicked, swell'd with lawless pride,
Have made the poor their prey;
O let them fall by those designs
Which they for others lay.

For straight they triumph, if success
Their thriving crimes attend;
And sordid wretches, whom God hates,
Perversely they commend

To own a pow'r above themselves
Their haughty pride disdains
And, therefore, in their stubborn mind
No thought of God remains.

Oppressive methods they pursue
And all their foes they slight;
Because thy judgments, unobserv'd,
Are far above their sight.

They fondly think their prosp'rous state
Shall unmolested be;
They think their vain design shall thrive,
From all misfortune free,

Vain and deceitful is their speech,
With curses fill'd, and lies;
By which the mischief of their heart
They study to disguise.

Near public roads they lie conceal'd
And all their art employ,
The innocent and poor at once
To rifle and destroy.

Not lions, crouching in their dens,
Surprise their heedless prey
With greater cunning, or express
More savage rage than they.

Sometimes they act the harmless man,
And modest looks they wear;
That so deceiv'd the poor may less
Their sudden onset fear

Part II

For God, they think, no notice takes,
Of their unrighteous deeds;

He never minds the suff'ring poor,
Nor their oppression heeds.

But thou, O Lord, at length arise,
Stretch forth thy mighty arm,
And, by the greatness of thy pow'r,
Defend the poor from harm.

No longer let the wicked vaunt,
And, proudly boasting, say
'Tush, God regards not what what we do;
He never will repay.' – Common Prayer Book

Shall I for fear of feeble man,
The spirit's course in me restrain?
Or, undismay'd in deed and word,
Be a true witness of my Lord.

Aw'd by mortal's frown, shall I
Conceal the word of God Most High!
How then before thee shall I dare
To stand, or how thy anger bear?

Shall I, to soothe th' unholy throne
Soften the truth, or smooth my tongue,
To gain earth's gilded toys or, flee
The cross endur'd, my Lord, by thee?

What then is he whose scorn I dread?
Whose wrath or hate makes me afraid
A man! An heir of death! A slave
To sin! A bubble on the wave!

Yea, let men rage, since thou will spread
Thy shadowing wings around my head:
Since in all pain thy tender love
Will still my sure refreshments prove.

Wesleys Collection¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 80-82. Professor Peter P. Hinks stated that these lines could not be found in either collection. Professor Edwin E. Moise, Professor of History at Clemson University pointed out that they “are” in both collections.

The Crucifixion of Walker

The reaction to the distribution of Walker's *Appeal* was like the appearance of a sudden hurricane on a quiet day. The response from the South was as if the very fabric of society was in danger. Southern slave-holding governments replied to Walker's *Appeal* by passing restrictive laws to intercept and restrict its distribution. South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Louisiana immediately passed laws against the possession of Walker's *Appeal*, with the death penalty for some.¹⁰⁸ In addition, slave literacy laws were made harsher. Professor of Southern History William Scarborough, at the University of Mississippi, stated that as a direct result of Walker's pamphlet, southern states passed legislation making it illegal to teach slaves and free blacks how to read and write.¹⁰⁹ The mayor of Savannah along with other southern politicians also wrote to the mayor of Boston asking for Walker to be arrested and Georgia offered a reward of \$1,000 dead and \$10,000 alive for Walker.¹¹⁰ The mayor of Boston, Harrison Gray Otis, replied to Mayor William T. Williams of Savannah, Governor George Rockingham Gilmer in Georgia, and Governor William Branch Giles in Virginia, that "notwithstanding the extremely bad and inflammatory tendency of the publication, he does not seem to have violated any of these laws."¹¹¹ An indictment against a white sailor named Edward Smith at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1830 aboard the ship *Colombo* from Boston, for

¹⁰⁸ Hasan Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's *Appeal* in Georgia," *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 3 (Summer 2001), 305.

¹⁰⁹ William Scarborough, "Africans in America: Judgment Day," PBS, retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i2984.html> (accessed December 25, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, in *Four Articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, vii.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

distributing the pamphlet, led to a conviction. The southern states also passed other measures like restricting the movement of sailors at the ports. *The North Star* summed it up that “this little book produced more commotion among slaveholders than any volume of its size that was ever issued from an American press.”¹¹²

In addition to the response by the South, what exacerbated Walker’s situation was the fact that there were those among his own camp who attacked him. Some of the abolitionists in the North, who believed in moral suasion and non-violence, viewed Walker as harmful to the abolitionist movement. They categorized his pamphlet as a dangerous, violent, and radical threat to the African American struggle. Those abolitionists that chose to oppose Walker’s stance in favor of non-violence, conditional, and gradual emancipation were mostly wealthy white and better-off black abolitionists. This group was less likely to scrutinize the reputation of a system they benefitted from and black abolitionists feared losing the wealthy and influential white constituents of the abolition struggle. This caused them to denounce Walker as radical by emphasizing his violent rhetoric and religious fanaticism.¹¹³ Author Vincent Harding in his book *There is*

¹¹² Douglass, “Sketch of the Life and Character of David Walker.”

¹¹³ August Meir, and Elliott M. Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 111-12. This book also states that the strains between less wealthy black abolitionists and wealthy white and black abolitionists increased up to the Civil War. In fact the Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York in 1843 that almost ended up in a close vote to employ violence in the abolition movement was initiated by black New York abolitionists who thought of the major abolition society, the American Moral Reform Society of the Garrison camp as run by whites who were “guilty of race prejudice and of monopolizing power within the antislavery movement.” These New York abolitionists thought of the aforementioned as too passive and not truly representing the interests and true feelings of blacks. African American moral reformer William Whipper, scorned terms like Negro, colored, and African in order to push for integration of black and white identity rather than a separate identity for African Americans. Samuel Cornish, one of the founders of Freedom’s Journal eventually left the Moral Reform Society in which membership declined afterwards.

a River stated that the crux of Walker's treatment was that people like Walker were labeled radicals because they,

Posed the most basic challenges, offered the most fundamental and wide-ranging resistance, raised the most profound questions about the nature of white society and the legitimacy of its power to control and define black people.¹¹⁴

Many within Walker's camp attacked his suggestion of violence and use of religion to justify it, but none ventured toward refuting his complaints. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison attacked the spirit of violence in the pamphlet. Benjamin Lundy stated "I can do no less than set the broadest seal of condemnation on it."¹¹⁵ Lundy also stated it contained "the wildest strain of fanaticism" and intended "to rouse the worst passions of human nature."¹¹⁶ He denounced it saying "a more bold, daring, inflammatory publication, perhaps, never issued from the press, in any country."¹¹⁷ In addition, Lundy commented further on the religious aspect of Walker's diatribe stating, "he makes a great parade of technical phraseology, purporting to be religious, but religion has nothing at all to do with it."¹¹⁸ Lundy felt, "there can be no impropriety in an expression of sentiment, on the part of the colored people, relative to their wrongs, provided it be done in a truly Christian spirit."¹¹⁹ However, Lundy did agree that Walker's complaints of the suffering of his people were legitimate. Instead northern abolitionists such as Lundy and Garrison wanted the abolitionist movement to use

¹¹⁴ Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New ork: Mariner Books, 1993), 42.

¹¹⁵ Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, in *Four articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, vi.

¹¹⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, xliii-xliv.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

morality rather than force, they predicted the latter would end in the extirpation of the black race. They disagreed with the use of violence and they both condemned Walker for religious fanaticism. The *Boston Evening* newspaper's editorial refused to believe the harsh conditions which Walker's people suffered. This represented how some Americans felt about blacks and was what Walker complained of earlier in his pamphlet about whites minimizing his people's suffering. The editorial on September 28, 1830 stated,

...freedom and emancipation! Why, what do our blacks require more than they already enjoy; if the constitution of the state refuses to admit them to places of emolument and trust, are they not more than doubly compensated by not being required to perform militia service? Are they not protected in property and person as sacredly as the white man? Are not our Halls of Justice as free to them as to us? It would seem as if these things were not so. It would be made to appear, that the free colored population of the Northern States actually suffered at this moment the hardships imposed upon their less favored brethren of the South...It is not that we do not treat the colored man well, but that he has been treated too well, both for his own interest and that of the community.-He has been made too much of, and taught to 'think of himself more highly than he ought to think.' His good qualities are over-estimated, and his vices palliated and excused, on the score of the oppression still born by his nation. It is quite time that...he should be made acquainted with his own deficiencies, taught self-respect, educated in the virtues of the white man, and not left to the imitation of his vices.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Walker devoted his life to organizing and acting toward the goal of unity, alleviating the oppression of his people, and removing the ignorance and apathy amongst his people. His life story is one of a kind and deserving of reverence in African American historiography and the historiography of struggles by oppressed minorities in general. He strived toward higher achievements for his people by making them aware that their conditions were worse than any other people in history, addressing the hypocrisy of

¹²⁰ Ibid., 109-10.

American Christianity, attacking ignorance, and augmenting black nationalism by casting doubt upon the American Colonization Society. Walker was very good in taking the suffering of his people and using it to augment this black nationalism in America. Sir Isaiah Berlin once stated, “nationalism is an inflamed condition of national consciousness which can be, and has on occasion been, tolerant and peaceful. It usually seems to be caused by wounds, some form of collective humiliation.”¹²¹ Vietnam Conflict author Douglas Pike also stated this was usually done by the Vietnamese using atrocity stories, denunciation of poverty, and the use of physical representations of these atrocities like mortar shells and dead bodies to provoke a common identity through suffering.”¹²² Walker did a very good job in this effort.

The reactions by northerners and southerners against Walker may give the impression that his call to violence was an exceptional case of, or the origin of, militant abolitionism in America. Professor Hinks claimed that Walker was influenced by Denmark Vesey because Walker’s pamphlet was such an exceptional case of militant abolitionism stating, “the fact that Walker publicly took on this dangerous position that almost all contemporary black reformers shunned espousing so openly suggests the influence of Vesey, especially because both grounded their use of violence in Scripture.”¹²³ Professor Hasan Crockett gave the impression in his article “The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker’s Appeal in Georgia” that Walker was the beginning

¹²¹ Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 99.

¹²² Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 284-85.

¹²³ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 34.

of the abolition movement in America. The attention dedicated to Walker's pamphlet in comparison to other examples of militant abolition also gave this impression. No other work advocating violence in the abolition movement has received comparable attention by scholars. However, it is necessary to make it clear this was not the case and to explain why he received such a negative response. Walker was not the first to use religion to advocate violence. In 1772 Reverend Isaac Skillman wrote a pamphlet entitled, *An Oration Upon the Beauties of Liberty, or the Essential Rights of the Americans* which declared in reference to slave rebellions "shall a man be deem'd a rebel that support his own rights? It is the first law of nature, and he must be a rebel to God, to the laws of nature, and his own conscience, who will not do it?" Reverend Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island published another work with the same thoughts in 1776.¹²⁴ J.P. Martin wrote an article titled "Rights of Black Men" after the Haitian Revolution,

We believe that freedom is the natural right of all rational beings and we know that the blacks have never voluntarily resigned that freedom. Then is not their cause as just as ours?...Let us be consistent, Americans, if we justify our own conduct in the late glorious revolution, let us justify whose who, in a cause like ours, fight with equal bravery.¹²⁵

There were many other examples of such pamphlets, speeches, and acts which preceded Walker. In addition to Walker's thoughts not being original, whites and blacks had attempted to promote insurrection amongst the slaves before Walker.

The question is why such a response from his enemies and his fellow abolitionists? Professor Hinks stated that,

¹²⁴ Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History*, 42.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 43.

Rather than indicting the fundamental values and principles of American society for endorsing a pursuit of individual liberty and profit which could be so immoral that it legitimized such a gross exploitation of labor such as slavery, Walker believed that unchristian hypocrites had flourished in America's historically unique freedom and perverted to their own cruel, avaricious, and selfish ends the values of liberty and equality that actually formed the hope that was America.¹²⁶

However, the answer to why such a response by abolitionists was partly because of his use of religion to promote violence, partly because of his call for unconditional and immediate emancipation, and more importantly, contrary to Professor Hink's statement, he did indict the fundamental principles and values of America. Walker did not challenge Christianity as a religion, but he challenged the legitimacy and sanctity of American and European Christianity, claiming that the religion had been corrupted since it came from Moses' hands to the Jewish, Europeans, and Americans.

Moses handed a dispensation of his divine will, to the children of Israel after they had left Egypt for Canaan or of Promise, who through hypocrisy, oppression, and unbelief, departed from the faith. – He then, by his apostles, handed a dispensation of his, together with the will of Jesus Christ, to the Europeans in Europe, who, in open violation of which, have made merchandise of us, and it does appear as though they take this very dispensation to aid them in their infernal depredations upon us. Indeed, the way in which religion was and is conducted by the Europeans and their descendants, one might believe it was a plan fabricated by themselves and the devils to oppress us. But Hark! My master has taught me better than to believe it – he has taught me that this gospel as it was preached by himself and his apostles remains the same, notwithstanding Europe has tried to mingle blood and oppression with it.¹²⁷

Walker's comment that blacks would be the people who would Christianize the world challenged the authority and legitimacy of all three.¹²⁸ There could be no larger indictment on American and European Christianity than Walker accusing the original recipients of the religion of corrupting it since its reception. Walker also indicted the

¹²⁶ Ibid., 247.

¹²⁷ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 37.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 20-22.

fundamental principles of Republicanism by pointing toward the inequalities which existed under the declared equality. He vehemently attacked one of the ideological founders of Republicanism and author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson. Walker's many mocking and sarcastic comments of "Republicanism" and "Liberty" throughout his pamphlet were indictments of American society. Walker also challenged the fundamental values and principles of American society by creating his own socioeconomic interpretation of western history from Greek and Roman times till his own. A history where "avarice", not corrupted Christianity alone, caused a pursuit of cheap labor in all of his examples of western countries. This "avarice" caused God's punishment upon western nations in the form of civil wars and revolutions. Although Walker identified corrupted Christianity as the culprit behind the perpetuation of slavery in America, avarice was the underlying factor in the economic exploitation of many people in the colonized western countries as well as the determinant for the corruption of Christianity. Walker did not suggest scrapping the rough draft of American society's principles and values or destroying them, but he did indict them to provoke a response, and demanded a change in the treatment of his people to coalesce with those principles. Even today, Bernhard Thuersam emphasized Walker's radical pamphlet,

He referred to the American Constitution as a murderous government and threatened that we shall, under God, obtain our liberty by the crushing arm of power.¹²⁹

Many northern abolitionists were perturbed because Walker held up a mirror to the system and reflected its worst excesses, challenging not slavery alone, but the whole

¹²⁹ Thuersam, "David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist" Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php>.

system. Walker's radical statements stigmatized him with the description of a religious fanatic by his abolitionist peers. Professor Hassan Crockett stated correctly that, "David Walker's *Appeal* was indeed a revolutionary pamphlet."¹³⁰ *The North Star* stated that besides the opposition from the South "he had many enemies, and not a few were his brethren whose cause he espoused. They said that he went too far, and was making trouble. So the Jews spoke of Moses."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's *Appeal* in Georgia," 318.

¹³¹ Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History*, 43.

CHAPTER 2: A DEFENSE OF WALKER

Introduction

Observations on Walker's work in the past condemned Walker's advocacy of violence and his use of religion to promote violence. This painted an incomplete picture. Even recently, Bernhard Thuersam said about Walker's pamphlet that it "...encouraged violent slave uprisings and racial warfare..."¹³² These observations were expressions of marginalization by the dominant white majority upon Walker's work. Professors Hinks' and Scriven's recent books on Walker's pamphlet attempted to make a complete picture by asserting that Walker focused on destroying the apathy and ignorance of his people while simultaneously promoting unity. However, there is a failure of explanation, in consideration of his people's conditions and comparison with other relevant examples in history, to explain why Walker may have chosen to advocate and use religion to promote violence. In addition, there was no investigation into how he might have perceived violence as a positive contribution to his people's struggle. It is necessary out of fairness to view the counter points against Bernhard Thuersam's assertion that,

Sadly, the humanitarian efforts toward manumission in the South were a casualty of radical abolitionists like Walker, and the bloody Nat Turner revolt in Virginia in August 1831 stopped the voluntary emancipation practice completely. As Walker was a free black, white Southerners now viewed that category of black person with great suspicion, with all black

¹³² Thuersam, "David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist" Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php>.

persons coming into North Carolina by ship to be quarantined, and no contact allowed between resident blacks and incoming ships.¹³³

Violence as a Tactic

Walker is remembered by students and others mostly for his advocacy of violence in the African American struggle. However, Walker not only threatened whites with violence to convince them to end slavery and racism against his people, he also made appeals to the morality of his people's oppressors to prevent violence. In other words, violence was a tactic, not an ideology. Although Walker threatened that if the conditions of his people were not alleviated, there would be a war which would root out some of his oppressors from the world, nowhere in his pamphlet did he demand this extirpation commence immediately. Walker's use of the bloody rebellion in Haiti and his exaggeration on the numbers of blacks over whites in certain states were to inspire his people to believe that violence could and should be used to produce their rights. His thesis was that violence against slavery was self-defense. His concern was not vindication for the wrongs done in the past upon his people, Walker was concerned with justifying violence to reverse his people's conditions.

On numerous occasions Walker asked white Americans to repent for their sins and make things right before the end of their country. He warned that slavery "will be the final overthrow of this government, unless something is very speedily done." Walker

¹³³ Ibid.,

continued that “unless you speedily alter your course, you and your country are gone!!!!!!”¹³⁴ Walker nearly begged, “Oh Americans! Americans!! I warn you in the name of the Lord, (whether you will hear, or forbear,) to repent and reform, or you are ruined!!!!!!”¹³⁵ Many other indications within his pamphlet support the assertion that he wanted compromise, rather than violence. The misunderstanding that Walker solely promoted violence could be taken from statements by Walker such as,

As true as the sun ever shone in its meridian splendor, my colour will root some of them out of the very face of the earth. They shall have enough of making slaves of, and butchering, and murdering us in the same manner which they have. No doubt, some may say that I write with a bad spirit, and that I being a black, wish these things to occur. Whether I write with a bad or good spirit, I say if these things do not occur in their proper time, it is because the world in which we live does not exist, and we are deceived with regard to its existence. – It is immaterial however to me, who believe, or who refuse – though I should like to see the whites repent peradventure God may have mercy upon them, some however, have gone so far that their cup must be filled.¹³⁶

However, a footnote in his pamphlet stated,

It is not to be understood here, that I mean for us to wait until God shall take us by the hair of our heads and drag us out of abject wretchedness and slavery, nor do I mean to convey the idea for us to wait until our enemies shall make preparations, and call us to seize those preparations, take it away from them, and put everything before us to death, in order to gain our freedom which God has given us. For you must remember that we are men as well as they. God has been pleased to give us two eyes, two hands, two feet, and some sense in our heads as well as they. They have no more right to hold us in slavery than we have to hold them, we have just as much right, in the sight of God, to hold them and their children in slavery and wretchedness, as they have to hold us, and no more.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, in *Four Articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, 51.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

In addition, he never suggested that the elimination of whites was the only possible solution. Walker's purpose was to advocate or justify violence by his people while threatening the possibility of the extermination of whites. However, Walker desired and believed in the possibility of blacks and whites living together in co-existence and peace, but most importantly on equal terms. Walker received tremendous criticism for advocating violence with religion for this end, despite the fact that many northern and southern authors who were revered during his time thought contrary to his stance. For example, Thomas Jefferson explained why he felt it was necessary to ship blacks out of the country through the American Colonization Society rather than incorporate them into the State,

It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the State, and thus save the expense of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites, ten thousand recollections by the blacks of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which Nature has made;; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.¹³⁸

Walker's advocacy of violence also had good reasons. His decision stemmed from disappointment with the results of an emphasis on non-violence by his abolitionist peers. Political Science Professor Hasan Crockett of Morehouse College described the pre-1830s abolitionists as conciliatory to the core, looking at slave-holders as brethren in a sordid business, and minimizing confrontations, while the post-1830s abolitionists viewed slave masters as enemies of justice, immoral, and criminal, while making direct confrontations with them. It is also interesting to note that those abolitionists who were

¹³⁸ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 149.

leading this pre-1830s movement were whites. W.E.B. Dubois stated about Walker's *Appeal*, "that tremendous indictment of slavery" represented the "first program of organized opposition to the action and attitude of the dominant white group [and included] ceaseless agitation and insistent demand for equality."¹³⁹ Walker predicted correctly that some among the pre-1830's camp of abolitionists would attack him for his advocacy of violence. As Crockett stated, "the publication of Walker's *Appeal* ushers in the second, militant, abolitionist movement."¹⁴⁰ Walker understood the importance of violence and non-violence in a struggle as Vo Nguyen Giap, head of the North Vietnamese People's Army of Viet-Nam,

...the shifting from political struggle to armed struggle was a very great change that required a long period of preparation. If insurrection is said to be an art, the main content of this art is to know how to give it the struggle forms appropriate to the political situation at each stage, how to maintain the correct relation between the forms of political struggle and those of armed struggle in each period.¹⁴¹

Walker was not a reckless disturber of peace without a reason, his *Appeal's* vivid and detailed descriptions of his people's conditions were his honest observations of how that pre-1830s movement had failed his people. Walker would have agreed with Jose Marti

¹³⁹ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 115.

¹⁴⁰ Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's *Appeal* in Georgia," 305.

¹⁴¹ Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army: The Vietcong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 76. The FMLN of El Salvador and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua both participated in armed struggle until their political parties were allowed political participation. After both became political parties ending their civil wars, they eventually won elections. There are many other examples of such violent and non-violent struggles procuring a solution to what a people perceive as intolerable conditions.

who once stated “he who wages war in a country, when he can avoid it, is a criminal, just as he who fails to promote war which cannot be avoided is a criminal.”¹⁴²

I Am a Man, Not a Brute!

Walker used the word “men” throughout his work to convey a concept of equality similar to the Declaration of Independence. Walker also used “brute” to mean an animal existence, not of the category of “men”. This was intentional. Walker denounced the apathy or inured attitude toward slavery and racism by his people, their ignorance, and treachery upon each other. He described those of his people who were in possession of these traits as brutes. Walker knew that these traits were used by southerners as evidence that his people did not deserve to have freedom and equality like other men. Southerners claimed these qualities were innate within his people which disqualified them from the category of men. Southern historian Ulrich B. Phillips stated in the early 20th century that negroes were suffering from “inherit ineptitude”, stupid, negligent, docile, dilatory, and by “racial quality submissive.”¹⁴³ Professor of History and president at William and Mary College in Virginia, Thomas Dew, once stated,

...in the free black, the principle of idleness and dissipation triumphs over that of accumulation and the desire to better our condition; the animal part of the man gains victory over the moral, and he, consequently, prefers sinking down into the listless inglorious repose of the brute creation, to rising to that energetic activity which can only be generated amid the multiplied, refined, and artificial wants of civilized society.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Bison Books, 1998), 187.

¹⁴³ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 13.

¹⁴⁴ Eric L. McKittrick, *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), 30.

Walker also believed that his people's apathy or lack of resistance against slavery and racism was a significant trait amongst the others which was used by whites to strip his people of their rights. Therefore, Walker wanted his people to prove with violence to Americans that they were not "brutes" but in fact "men" who deserved to have freedom and rights granted by the Declaration of Independence. Walker believed that the use of violence was necessary in order to destroy the stereotype of his people being inherently submissive or apathetic. The origin of Walker's beliefs were not his own invention but came from a man who declared all "men" were created equal in the creation of America, Thomas Jefferson.

Some dilettantes of history today still do not recognize the antipathy Walker had for Jefferson. Thuersam stated that "ironically, Walker saw Thomas Jefferson as a role model for liberty, given his views on human equality expounded in the Declaration of Independence, but he either did not read or understand Jefferson's views on the impossibility of the two races living in harmony together in one land."¹⁴⁵ On the contrary, Walker believed that Jefferson had a large influence upon the minds of white Americans in the detrimental treatment of his people. Walker used many quotes from Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Walker also believed that Jefferson's statements about blacks' natural inferiority influenced whites to believe his people were not men. Walker stated that "Mr. Jefferson's severe remarks on us have been so extensively argued upon by men whose attainments in literature, I shall never be able to reach."¹⁴⁶ Walker also

¹⁴⁵ Thuersam, "David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist" Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php>.

¹⁴⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 25.

asked, “do you know that Mr. Jefferson was one of as great characters as ever lived among the whites?”¹⁴⁷ Professor Darryl Scriven agreed that Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, was considered the most important scientific and political book written by an American before 1785. Also, much of Jefferson’s fame as a philosopher came from this work.¹⁴⁸ However, no recent or past scholar has gone into detail about the possible influences of Jefferson’s book on Walker nor Walker’s refutations of Jefferson’s ideas.

Thomas Jefferson defended and admired Native Americans while speaking terribly about African Americans in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. He compared red and black men to whites in mental capacity,

...let me add too, as a circumstance of great tenderness, where our conclusion would degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their creator may perhaps have given them. To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.¹⁴⁹

Jefferson continued about the mental capacity, personality, and character of blacks while making positive remarks about Native Americans,

Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether Heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection...Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous...Most of them, indeed, have been confined to tillage, to their own homes, and their own society; yet many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up to the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴⁸ Scriven, *A Dealer of Old Clothes*, 41.

¹⁴⁹ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 155.

have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad. The Indians, with no advantage of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as to prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never seen an elementary trait of painting or sculpture...Misery is often the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry. Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. Love is the peculiar oestrus of the poet. Their love is ardent, but it kindles the sense only, not the imagination. Religion, indeed, has produced a Phyllis Whately; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism.¹⁵⁰

He commented on the beauty of blacks in comparison to animals and whites,

Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of color in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favor of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan for the black women over those of his own species.¹⁵¹

He stated what he thought was necessary of an American society with blacks and whites in it,

Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.¹⁵²

Jefferson went into more detail about his admiration about Native Americans claiming that,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 152.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵² Ibid., 155.

He is neither more defective in ardor, nor more impotent with his female, than the white reduced to the same diet and exercise; that he is brave, when an enterprise depends on bravery; education with him making the point of honor consist in the destruction of an enemy by stratagem, and in the preservation of his own person free from injury; or perhaps this is nature; while it is education that teaches us to honor force more than finesse; that he will defend himself against an host of enemies, always choosing to be killed rather than to surrender, though it be to the whites, who he knows will treat him well; that in other situations also he meets death with more deliberation, and endures tortures with a firmness unknown almost to religious enthusiasms with us; that he is affectionate to his children, careful of them, and indulgent to the extreme; that his affections comprehend his other connections, weakening, as with us, from circle to circle, as they recede from the centre; that his friendships are strong and faithful to the uttermost extremity; that his sensibility is keen, even the warriors weeping most bitterly on the loss of their children, though in general they endeavor to appear superior to human events; that his vivacity and activity of mind is equal to ours in the same situation...An inhuman practice once prevailed in this country of making slaves of the Indians...we shall probably find that they are formed in mind as well as body, on the same module with the 'Homo sapiens Europaeus.' ...I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when Governor of this state.¹⁵³

Jefferson's influence on Walker is demonstrated by some of the traits the latter asked his people to take on in his *Appeal*, which were similar to the traits Jefferson thought made Native and Caucasian Americans superior to African Americans above. Walker asked his people to prefer black rather than white women because Jefferson claimed blacks preferred white women over their own, to have religious fervor in their struggle, to stop their treachery amongst each other and remain loyal to each other and their cause, stop harming their children without conscience, to learn to compete with whites in creativity and imagination rather than memorization, and to prefer death rather than life for a cause or principle. These are the qualities in the above paragraphs which Jefferson admired about Native and Caucasian Americans over blacks.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 67.

While Walker was deplored for his suggestion of violence or force in his people's struggle, Walker's attempt to understand why his people were subjected to racism and slavery, or not recognized as men deserving equal rights, led him to America's founding father who claimed that "force is law."¹⁵⁴ It also led him to Jefferson's admiration for the Native Americans in comparison to Walker's people because the former were brave and resilient in war. It was this same American founding father who believed that the use of violence in the American Revolution was a natural reaction for oppressed humans to assert that they were men. Walker learned from revered founders such as Jefferson and Thomas Paine, the latter once stated, "there are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, violence was not only a tactic of struggle, violence was also a natural reaction as in the American Revolution to prove his people's worthiness of the rights of men. Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and *Notes on the State of Virginia* may have been the sources which inspired Walker to promote violence in his pamphlet. Walker accepted Thomas Jefferson's claims in his work about his respect for Native Americans over blacks because of their use of force or violence, yet a big difference was that Jefferson did not receive half the scrutiny from contemporary or recent historians.

Jefferson's influence on Walker becomes clearer with the latter's own words,

See how the American people treat us – have we souls in our bodies? Are we men who have any spirits at all? I know there are many swell-bellied fellows among us, whose greatest object is to fill their stomachs. Such I do not mean – I am after those who know and feel, that

¹⁵⁴ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 65.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 52.

we are MEN, as well as other people; to them, I say, that unless we try to refute Mr. Jefferson's arguments respecting us, we will only establish them.¹⁵⁶

David Walker's reaction to Jefferson was,

For my own part, I am glad Mr. Jefferson has advanced his position for your sake; for you will either have to contradict or confirm him by your own actions, and not by what our friends have said or done for us; for those things are other men's labours, and do not satisfy the Americans, who are waiting for us to prove to them ourselves, that we are MEN, before they will be willing to admit the fact; for I pledge you my sacred word of honour, that Mr. Jefferson's remarks respecting us, have sunk deep into the hearts of millions of the whites, and never will be removed this side of eternity. – For how can they, when we are confirming him every day, by our groveling submissions and treachery.¹⁵⁷

Walker continued ,

...how could Mr. Jefferson but have given these remarks respecting us, when we are so submissive to them, and so much servile deceit prevail among ourselves – when we so meanly submit to their murderous lashes, to which neither the Indians nor any other people under Heaven would submit? No, they [Native Americans] would die to a man, before they would suffer such things from men who are no better than themselves, and perhaps not so good.¹⁵⁸

He furthered,

Why do they not bring the inhabitants of Asia to be body servants to them? They know they would get their bodies rent and torn from head to foot. Why do they not get the Aborigines of this country to be slaves to them and their children, to work their farms and dig their mines? They know well that the Aborigines of this country, or (Indians) would tear them from the earth. The Indians would not rest day or night, they would be up all times of night, cutting their cruel throats.¹⁵⁹

Walker went further in his responses to Jefferson's remarks by providing his own explanation as to why his people seemed inured to the conditions they suffered. In his *Appeal*, Walker included a section titled "Affray and Murder", which was about a slave

¹⁵⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 65.

rebellion in Kentucky on August of 1829 during the transportation of slaves to another state. One of the slaves, a woman, saved a slave master while the rest were murdered.

Walker stated that his people's apathy was a really a result of humane and merciful emotions as with this woman's actions, rather than inferiority as Jefferson and other southerners claimed. Walker stated,

...was it the natural fine feelings of this woman, to save such a wretch alive? I know that the blacks, take them half enlightened and ignorant, are more humane and merciful than the most enlightened and refined Europeans that can be found in all the earth. Natural observations have taught me these things; there is a solemn awe in the hearts of the blacks, as it respects murdering men: whereas the whites murder all before them.¹⁶⁰

Walker added as a footnote to this, "which is the reason the whites take advantage of us."

In addition, he stated,

...if you commence, make sure work – do not trifle, for they will not trifle with you – they want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us in order to subject us to that wretched condition – therefore, if there is an attempt made by us, kill or be killed...Oh! Coloured people of the United States, I ask you, in the name of that God who made us, have we, in consequence of oppression, nearly lost the spirit of man, and in no very trifling degree, adopted that of brutes?...how can those enemies but say that we and our children are not of the human family?¹⁶¹

Walker's frustration with this woman was because this humane and merciful response allowed Jefferson and other southerners to mistake it for inferiority. Her act of compassion would be used to stigmatize her and Walker's people as inferior, perpetuating all of their suffering. He wanted his people, if they commenced rebellion to not regret it and follow through with full commitment to demonstrate that they were as

¹⁶⁰ Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, in *Four Articles David Walker. An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, 35-36.

¹⁶¹ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 28.

brave and resilient as the Native Americans. It is noticeable that Walker used the term “natural observations” to introduce his observations of the nature of blacks and whites just as Jefferson did in his work when declaring that blacks were inferior to whites. Walker also commented on the nature of whites in response to Jefferson with vindication,

The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority.--We view them all over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first known to be anything, (in consequence of education) we see them there, cutting each other's throats--trying to subject each other to wretchedness and misery--to effect which, they used all kinds of deceitful, unfair, and unmerciful means. We view them next in Rome, where the spirit of tyranny and deceit raged still higher. We view them in Gaul, Spain, and in Britain.--In fine, we view them all over Europe, together with what were scattered about in Asia and Africa, as heathens, and we see them acting more like devils than accountable men. But some may ask, did not the blacks of Africa, and the mulattoes of Asia, go on in the same way as did the whites of Europe. I answer, no--they never were half so avaricious, deceitful and unmerciful as the whites, according to their knowledge. But we will leave the whites or Europeans as heathens, and take a view of them as Christians, in which capacity we see them as cruel, if not more so than ever. In fact, take them as a body, they are ten times more cruel, avaricious and unmerciful than ever they were; for while they were heathens, they were bad enough it is true, but it is positively a fact that they were not quite so audacious as to go and take vessel loads of men, women and children, and in cold blood, and through devilishness, throw them into the sea, and murder them in all kind of ways. While they were heathens, they were too ignorant for such barbarity. But being Christians, enlightened and sensible, they are completely prepared for such hellish cruelties. Now suppose God were to give them more sense, what would they do? If it were possible, would they not *dethrone* Jehovah and seat themselves upon his throne? I therefore, in the name and fear of the Lord God of Heaven and of earth, divested of prejudice either on the side of my colour or that of the whites, advance my suspicion of them, whether they are *as good by nature* as we are or not.¹⁶²

There is no way to tell whether Walker knew the outcome of this slave revolt in Kentucky. All of the slaves were executed including the female slave who helped the white master escape. Before her execution, she was found to be pregnant and was allowed to remain in jail until she gave birth, after which she was then hanged on May 25, 1830 before the remaining slaves of this incident were executed. One of the slaves

¹⁶² Ibid., 19-20.

was reported to have exclaimed immediately before hanging “death-death at any time in preference to slavery.”¹⁶³

30 years before Herbert Spencer’s popularization of Social Darwinism in his *Principles of Biology* in 1864 and Lester Ward’s challenge to Spencer years later, Walker engaged in a feud against Jefferson in a nature versus nurture argument. As Jefferson stated the nature of blacks in comparison to whites, how Roman slaves like Epictetus, Diogenes, and others became tutors to their masters’ children and skilled artists, “...they were the race of whites. It is not their condition then, but Nature, which has produced this distinction. Whether further observation will or will not verify the conjecture, that Nature has been less bountiful to them [blacks]...”¹⁶⁴ While Jefferson claimed blacks were naturally inferior because they did not assert their rights, Walker replied that in addition to his people being more human and merciful than whites by nature rather than inferior, that his people were men who were apathetic as a result of centuries of oppression from racism and slavery which was brought down upon them because of their disunity.¹⁶⁵ Walker responded to Jefferson’s remarks, “It is indeed surprising, that a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts,

¹⁶³ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 287-288.

¹⁶⁴ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 154.

¹⁶⁵ *A Class Divided*, DVD, William Peters (Alexandria, VA: Production of Yale University Films for Frontline, 2003). An interesting social experiment demonstrates Jefferson’s mistake. The social divide based on differences one cannot change about oneself is dehumanizing and has negative effects in the social environment. In an experiment in a classroom, a teacher names Jane Elliot separated the class according to color of eyes. She allowed more privileges to brown and blue-eyed children alternating treatment. She even went further in vocally voicing the stereotypes of each. The results were very interesting. One blue-eyed kid suggested using a yardstick to punish brown-eyed children. Elliot stated, ‘I watched what had been marvelous, cooperative, wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating, and little third graders in the space of 15 minutes.’ Some students teased the other being discriminated against. Improved performance occurred for those told they were superior because of the color of their eyes. Decreased educational performance of those discriminated against.

should speak so of a set of men in chains. I do not know what to compare it to, unless, like putting one wild deer in an iron cage, where it will be secured, and hold another by the side of the same, then let it go, and expect the one in the cage to run as fast as the one at liberty.”¹⁶⁶ However, Walker did agree with Jefferson that violence was a natural response to ascertain a man’s freedom.

Religious Fanaticism

Walker’s use of religion to justify violence and his prediction of a Hannibal delivered to his people to save them from slavery, were statements critics used to label him a religious fanatic.¹⁶⁷ However, there was a lack of details why he was labeled a religious fanatic. Was it because Walker had interpretations of the bible which were not premised on actual passages or he did not make any logical sense? It is the author’s opinion it was because Walker used religion to justify violence. Nevertheless, this stigma of religious fanaticism lasted to the early 20th century. In addition to Benjamin Lundy’s condemnation of Walker’s use of religion to justify violence as fanaticism, Professor Clement Eaton in a 1936 article described Walker stating “like many fanatics” and immediately adding that Walker offered “to those Negroes who would fight in the glorious cause of liberating the slaves the promised support of religion.”¹⁶⁸ However, it is important to consider that Walker was not the only one to use religion to justify violence

¹⁶⁶ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 12.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶⁸ Clement Eaton, “A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South,” *The Journal of Southern History* 2, no. 3 (August 1936), 324-25.

and received harsher criticism for this than others. It is also necessary to state that the conditions of his people may have justified his behavior. More importantly, Walker's use of religion was not so abnormal to warrant the description of a religious fanatic.

Professor Hinks stated that Walker may have learned how to use the Bible for violence from Denmark Vesey, who used it in his conspiracy in 1822.¹⁶⁹ Vesey preached to his insurgents that like the children of Israel, they would be free from bondage.¹⁷⁰ However, it may not have been Vesey that taught Walker, but both were exposed to religious thinking that had antecedents. Abolitionists before Walker were using religion to justify resistance. As early as 1773, petitions from slaves to Governor Thomas Hutchinson of the Royal Crown were using religion and egalitarian ideas in their content to petition for emancipation.¹⁷¹ In the 17th century, Hugh Brian in Charles Town, South Carolina, wrote and distributed a pamphlet speaking of prophecies, the destruction of Charles Town, and freedom for blacks.¹⁷² While Walker predicted the arrival of a Hannibal to bring salvation to the slaves and deliver them from slavery, a pamphlet by Robert Alexander Young in February 1829 in New York predicted an invincible black savior who would lead his people out of bondage.¹⁷³ There were examples well before Walker that there existed a strain of Christianity which supported using violence to free his people. Where did these religious influences on Walker and other African American abolitionists come from? Who taught African Americans Christianity and could Walker's

¹⁶⁹ *Slavery and the Making of America: Volume 2, Liberty in the Air*.

¹⁷⁰ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 269.

¹⁷¹ *Slavery and the Making of America: Volume 2, Liberty in the Air*

¹⁷² Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History*, 42-43.

¹⁷³ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 20.

ideas have originated from those teachers? Why did Walker receive the attention he did in comparison to these other examples?

One of the differences between Walker and these examples was that he went further by stating that blacks, not whites, were the chosen ones to Christianize the world because of their oppression. This seemed to be one of the most non-normative statements by Walker that could be construed as fanaticism. Walker stated,

It is my solemn belief, that if ever the world becomes Christianized, (which must certainly take place before long) it will be through the means, under God of the *Blacks*, who are now held in wretchedness, and degradation, by the white *Christians* of the world, who before they learn to do justice to us before our Maker--and be reconciled to us, and reconcile us to them, and by that means have clear consciences before God and man.--Send out Missionaries to convert the Heathens, many of whom after they cease to worship gods, which neither see nor hear, become ten times more the children of Hell, then ever they were, why what is the reason? Why the reason is obvious, they must learn to do justice at home, before they go into distant lands, to display their charity, Christianity, and benevolence; when they learn to do justice, God will accept their offering, (no man may think that I am against Missionaries for I am not, my object is to see justice done at home, before we go to convert the Heathens.)¹⁷⁴

However, Walker's use of propaganda to persuade his people that they were the chosen ones of God and the use of this claim to justify violence was not so unique in comparison to other examples in history. Historian Eugene Genovese stated about the use of chosenness by blacks such as Walker,

Without a sense of being God's chosen people-chosen, that is, to bring his Kingdom, not merely to be delivered by him-the slaves could not easily develop that sense of national mission which has been so efficacious in the formation of revolutionary ideology- - which has so marvelously sparked the liberation of nations and classes and simultaneously brought so much imperialist gangsterism into the world.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 20-22.

¹⁷⁵ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 21-22.

In addition, many years after Garrison's and Lundy's time, proponents of the White Man's Burden and Manifest Destiny would use religion to declare that whites were the chosen people of God and endorse expansion that was achieved by violent means. Walker was not the last to declare a certain people chosen by God which warrants the question of whether his fanaticism was that fanatical when ideologies such as the former and latter caught popularity after his time?

Accusations of Walker's religious fanaticism through his use of religion to advocate violence are egregious in consideration of human behavior and the context under which Walker's incendiary pamphlet was written. When people are subjected to harsh conditions, they become more susceptible to radical ideologies. Religion like nationalism is one of those ideologies that offer haven for the distraught. Although the extent of religion may be different between examples in history, we can see in many examples a rise in religion coalescing with a fall in conditions of living. For example, during the many years of economic embargo that the U.S. placed on Iraq after the Persian Gulf War, religion became more important to the lives of Iraqis. Author Ahmed H. Hashim stated, "the sanctions regime that existed between 1991 and 2003 promoted the return to religion among the Iraqi population. The destruction of the Iraqi middle class, the decline of the secular educational system and the rise of illiteracy, and the growth of despair and anomie have resulted in large numbers of Iraqis seeking shelter in religion."¹⁷⁶ All of these precursors which resulted in the rise of religion in Iraq existed amongst Walker's people. Walker complained that the black middle class or free blacks

¹⁷⁶ Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, 11.

were deprived in comparison to whites in economic opportunity and that his people were prevented from learning education and religion. It was not recklessness, but the conditions of slavery and racism, which subjected blacks to penury, violence, and hopelessness, that caused African Americans like David Walker to transform the religion taught to them to provide a justification and a means to unite their people to withstand and fight against oppression. It is not surprising then that Walker used religion to justify the use of violence to achieve those ends.

The use of religion to create unity under poor conditions of living not only precedes Walker's time but we can see it in recent historical examples as well. In many third world struggles during the Cold War, as in Nicaragua with the Sandinistas and El Salvador with the FMLN, religion was used to justify the struggle of the poor for better circumstances and consequently augment the fighting ability of the insurgents. In El Salvador, Oscar Romero was assassinated by a death squad led by U.S. trained Roberto D'Aubisson because of his religious teachings that peasants were to struggle for better conditions on earth, contrary to the norm of fatalism (acceptance that they would be rewarded in heaven and thus should not worry about improving their lives on earth). This ideology in the Roman Catholic church was labeled Liberation Theology and was denounced by the Pope at the time. The importance of religion for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua at the end of the Civil War was described by author Matilde Zimmerman, "when the Sandinistas entered Managua on July 19, 1979, one of the first public events to celebrate victory was a Mass presided over by Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo and

attended by thousands.”¹⁷⁷ The point is that Walker used religion just as many others across the world in history and now have employed it, to unite a people behind a common cause of eliminating oppression and to justify violence against that oppression. Walker’s use of religion to support violence was not as abnormal as one may be led to believe by his critics.

Walker’s description as a religious fanatic also does not consider his opposition’s beliefs. Walker justified the use of violence to end slavery with religion while the same was being done in the South to support slavery. If Walker was guilty of religious Fanaticism, equal condemnation should be accorded to southern proponents of slavery. Southern Christianity attempted to sink deep within the mentality of blacks and other minorities that whites were philanthropists and missionaries of God instead of oppressors. This propaganda stated that God supported and approved of the whites’ treatment of blacks. An anonymous Southern Clergyman published a response to Henry Clay in defense of slavery,

Moreover, the indications of Divine Providence, seen in the unexampled prosperity of the negro race among us-in their increase, and mental and moral elevation-bespeak their condition of slavery as fulfilling his purposes concerning them, in more direct accordance to the prophetic decree of God...¹⁷⁸

This clergyman continued,

We next ask him, if God did not incorporate with the Jewish polity, slavery; consisting in perpetual bondage? What is remarkable too it was negro slavery, or the bondage of the Canaanitish descendants of Ham, who God authorized to be held in hereditary bondage,

¹⁷⁷ Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua in Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 161.

¹⁷⁸ A Southern Clergyman et al., *A Defense of Southern Slavery, and Other Pamphlets* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 18.

under the laws of the Jewish polity. Leviticus xxv. 45. Again we ask Mr. Clay, or any of his coadjutors at the North (for we hope he has none at the South) whether God, in his infinite goodness, did not see that slavery would be a blessing, both to the master and servant, as the ground of his appointment of the institution amongst his chosen people? And if he had seen slavery to be a social and moral evil, would he not have inflicted a curse, and not a blessing upon the nation whom it was his intention to bless?¹⁷⁹

While white Southern preachers claimed that whites were the descendants of Japheth and Shem and blacks those of Canaan, Walker twisted this declaring that blacks, not whites, were the true chosen people of God (the oppressed were the ones God sided with), that God disapproved of the whites' treatment of his people, and that the white man is not the master of blacks but God and only God is master of all. Author and historian, Herbert Aptheker stated,

...one of the most basic devices of control was fostering of a belief in the innate inferiority of the Negro people. Theologians assured all and sundry – including the slaves themselves – that the Negroes were the accursed of God, either the descendants of Cain or else of the 'snake' who tempted Eve and who was 'really' the Negro. So-called ethnologists, sociologists, and historians offered alleged proof of the natural inferiority of the Negro and the propriety, indeed, the necessity, of his filling the God-ordained role of slave to the white man, laws and propaganda emanating from colleges, pulpits, politicians, and press continually and incessantly drummed out the concept of the inferiority of an entire people, year after year, generation and generation.¹⁸⁰

Aptheker mentioned that slaves were taught in church to work hard and not be saucy, impudent, stubborn, or sullen. Southern religion pushed meekness and docility. Aptheker continued "Nor are they [slaves] to alter their behavior if the owner is cross or mean or cruel; that is the Lord's concern, not theirs, and they are to leave the master's punishment

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁰ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 53. In Brazil, this propaganda was also used. See also David M. Godenbourg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Pages 175, 178. and 359.

to him.”¹⁸¹ The same Southern clergymen quoted above in response to Henry Clay also stated,

Let Mr. Clay read the ninth Chapter of Genesis, and say whether the curse inflicted upon Canaan and his posterity, and the annexed prophecy of their servitude, in the form too of slavery (for the terms imply bondage,) do not indicate the Canaanitish or African race, as doomed, under the appointment of God, to perpetual servitude. That curse gave the flat skull, and other physical changes which stamp upon them inferiority of intellect, and their whole history has thus far, shown them incapable of self government, and to be constitutionally fitted to enjoy civil and religious freedom, in its highest blessing to them, only in a state of slavery or absolute servitude, under the other races of Noah. Look at the history of the negro everywhere, when left to himself...their tribes were engaged in relentless warfare, delighting in the most cruel butchery of captives...And does the condition of the race, enlightened and Christianized through slavery among the whites, receive benefit or improvement from emancipation?¹⁸²

He stated about runaway slaves,

The Bible teaches slaves that they have no more right to escape from the possession and service of the master, than they have to steal their value in money...a flagrant breach of the 8th and 10th commandments-and that God holds all fugitive slaves in the character of thieves and robbers...¹⁸³

Bryan Tyson, a NC resident stated in defense of slavery against abolitionists’ accusations that God did not condone slavery because God would not allow slaves to be ill-treated by their masters,

...if the servant evilly treated will raise his petition to Him who ruleth on high, it will, I think, in the end be of no disadvantage to him. The hard taskmaster will, in a coming day, stand at the bar of God, there to be judged according to the deeds in the body, and there will be shown no respect of persons.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 56-57.

¹⁸² A Southern Clergyman et al., *A Defense of Southern Slavery, and Other Pamphlets*, 6.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 22.

In a sense, religion justified the very institution which slaves lived under, even to the extent of excusing the occasional violence inflicted upon them.

The use of religion to advocate violence not only existed in the South but can also be found in our own country's revolutionary founders' ideas. Violence was used to gain independence from Britain to form the nation we live in today. Some of the principles to justify that right of rebellion were inalienable rights granted to us by God. These ideas had origin in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* which contained many references to God. The Declaration of Independence stated that the rights to pursue happiness, life, and liberty were granted to us by our creator. Likewise, Walker used religion to declare his people deserved the same rights given to white Americans. Walker had more understanding of the American Revolution than historians have granted him and his *Appeal* contain the indications. The author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, whom Walker mentioned often in his pamphlet stated once in reference to slavery,

And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that that God is just; and that his justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural interference. The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.¹⁸⁵

This statement is similar to Walker's idea that freedom is a gift of God and it was only natural to use violence as in the American Revolution to gain life, liberty, and the pursuit

¹⁸⁵ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 174-175.

of happiness. We can see Walker's prediction of God's wrath of vengeance upon those who deny freedom to his creation, in Jefferson's statement. Thomas Paine also attacked the power of the King of England by declaring that only God is a king or master over humans and that it was unnatural to revere the king as God. Paine stated,

Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a curse in reserve is denounced against them And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the persons of kings. He need not wonder that the Almighty, ever jealous of his honor, should disapprove of a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of heaven.¹⁸⁶

Walker did the same, rejecting the southern religious propaganda that whites were ordained to be masters over the slaves by declaring only God was master over humankind.

Religion was also used in the American Revolution by colonists and clergymen to support the oppressed, proclaiming that God supported the right of a people to fight against a tyrant such as the King of England. Millennial type thinking was used to justify rebellion against the British in the American Revolution. Some colonists and clergymen thought of the American Revolution as a fight against evil where the Messiah would arrive with the defeat of the evil British which would produce peace on earth. Walker also thought of a Messiah coming to bring God's wrath upon his evil oppressors (although Hannibal was a Pagan). The British viewed the American Revolution's religious propaganda just as American historians and abolitionists viewed Walker's efforts, as religious fanaticism. As the British were accused of persecuting the religious

¹⁸⁶ Paine, *Common Sense*, 11-12. Paine wrote that Gideon was offered kingship and replied to the Jews that this title belonged to God only.

freedoms of the colonists, Walker declared the hypocrisy and persecution by Christian Americans who deterred his people from learning and practicing religion.¹⁸⁷

If Walker was a religious fanatic, then his *Appeal's* similarities to the use of religion in our very own revolution warrants historians to determine if some during the American Revolution may be guilty of the same charge. Lundy, Garrison, Eaton, and others did not compare Walker's justification of violence through the religious idea of God's gifts of natural rights with Thomas Jefferson's own thinking and the ideologies behind the American Revolution. More importantly, the criticism of Walker as a religious fanatic fails to recognize that blacks and whites living together would make them both recipients of cultural diffusion involving religion, which also involved the diffusion of revolutionary ideas from the whites during the American Revolution to blacks. The accusation that Walker was a religious fanatic was similar to criticizing the person in the mirror. It is important to ask if the ends such as liberation, justified Walker's means as in the American Revolution.

A Silent Minority

The southern slaveholding states' propaganda during Walker's time justified slavery by claiming that slaves were happy under slavery. Historian William S. Drewry stated that, "slavery in Virginia was not such as to arouse rebellion, but was an institution

¹⁸⁷ Library of Congress, "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic," October 27, 2003, Library of Congress, Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel03.html>. (accessed December 25, 2009).

which nourished the strongest affection and piety in slave and owner.”¹⁸⁸ Author of the *Arator* John Taylor, noted earlier in John Randolph’s speech to the American Colonization Society, stated, “slaves are docile, useful and happy, if they are well managed”¹⁸⁹ Author F. Roy Johnson’s 20th century book “The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection” gave a good example of the continuation of this thinking into recent times by southern slaveholders in defense of slavery. Johnson stated that the plantation was not “unpleasant”, “pacifying influences” made slavery “palatable to a large majority of the blacks”, and that the slave-owning Turner family convinced slaves “amidst the increasing agitation for manumission” that life on the Turner plantation was “the most pleasant and rewarding kind for them.” A Southern clergyman responded to Henry Clay’s attacks on slavery,

The slaves too being protected in life, limb and health, through the interest and friendship of the owner-having all their necessary wants supplied, and none or few of the responsibilities of life or cares of the world devolving upon them – are the most contented and happy class of people on earth. Does not the condition of society at the South then with the institution of slavery interwoven with the social state, evidently constitute the very connexion which God intended to exist between the two races of Japheth and Canaan?¹⁹⁰

A response by an anonymous Georgian citizen to Northern Abolitionists stated,

Let the writers who are so sensitive on this subject make a visit to one of the Southern States, in company with some moderate or extensive slave-holder, who has been with his family on a summer excursion, and let him witness the cheerful excitement, the undisguised satisfaction and heartfelt joy manifested by the slaves at home, as the family return to their dwelling-let him witness the delight with which the old servants and the young ones meet their owners and their children, and let him then judge for himself, whether there are any of those hostile feelings, those inimical sensations on either side, which he might have previously supposed not sides to have entertained. The fact is, there is a warm and sincere attachment very

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth S. Greenberg,, *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). 165.

¹⁸⁹ John Taylor of Caroline, *The Arator: Being a Series of Agricultural Essays, Practical and Political*, 85.

¹⁹⁰ A Southern Clergyman et al., *A Defense of Southern Slavery, and Other Pamphlets*, 25.

generally felt by slaves for their owners, and there is an affectionate regard felt and manifested by their owners towards them...¹⁹¹

In addition, paternalism was the psychological ploy which the slave masters employed to defend the morality of such an institution. The South's attribution of child-like characteristics to blacks augmented this propaganda by placing in the minds of its audience that because blacks were like physically grown children, they needed supervision and care to help them with their atrophied mental capacity. Thomas Ruffin once stated in the early 19th century,

It was much easier for those who now condemn so strenuously our toleration of slavery, to capture and enslave the helpless Africans and bring them here; than for us, without crime yet more heinous, to renounce our dominion over them and turn them loose to their own discretion and self-destruction. Their fate would soon be that of our native savages or the enfranchised blacks of the West Indies. Slavery indeed, is not a pure and unmixed good. Nor is anything that is human.¹⁹²

Southern slaveholders painted an image that the plantation was a home for orphans. This challenged the abolitionists' accusations against the slave institution as a system of terror and brutality with a moral, compassionate, and philanthropic institution. A Southern clergyman stated,

It was certainly not God's intention to degrade the descendants of Shem's and Japheth's their guides and guardians but to preserve them from a condition of degradation to which their self-management under the curse already inflicted upon them, would in the nature of the case, reduce them unassisted by the guardianship of the more intelligent races; and we think the condition of the negro race everywhere, under the control of Shem and Japheth is shown to be bettered when compared to the negroes left to manage for themselves...¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹² Thuersam, "David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist." 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php>.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 41-42.

The same Southern clergyman, responding to Henry Clay's attacks against slavery, described the posterity of Canaan,

A very large proportion of them are slaves...accustomed to be ruled and taken care of by others, they are no better than mere children, as respects the conduct and economy of life...they prove totally inadequate to sustain themselves.¹⁹⁴

Southerners also kept silent about slave revolts in order to uphold the image of a happy orphanage and deter possible federal intervention in their economic, social, and political institution. The South was sensitive to outside opinions given the fact that slavery had been abolished by the majority of countries in Europe, especially with a resolute abolitionist movement in England. John Quincy Adams stated in his diary on January 10, 1821, that the abolitionist development in England "may prove an earthquake upon this continent."¹⁹⁵ Professor of Southern History William Scarborough at the University of Mississippi stated recently that Southerners liked to brag to the northerners that they were absolutely safe from insurrection.¹⁹⁶ A citizen of Georgia stated about the circulation of abolitionist papers in the South, "they manifest an unwarrantable inclination to interfere...it is calculated to occasion unpleasant feelings towards many who may come here for business or for pleasure."¹⁹⁷ In addition to Southern media silence, the Northern newspapers were reluctant to condemn slavery. Northerners did not want to upset the South and threaten a separation of the Union. More importantly,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁵ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 265-66.

¹⁹⁶ Scarborough, "Africans in America: Judgment Day," PBS. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i2984.html>.

¹⁹⁷ A Southern Clergyman et al., *A Defense of Southern Slavery, and Other Pamphlets*, 26.

Northerners would not go to the extent of Walker in scrutinizing its religious institutions, nor Republicanism. Therefore, Walker's challenge was two-fold in that he had to challenge the media silence of the South and North while simultaneously refuting the propaganda of the South about slavery. In response to Walker's *Appeal*, Governor Gilmore of Georgia convened a secret meeting of the Georgia House, where he handed Walker's pamphlet to all of the delegates and cautioned everyone "...less should be said than done..."¹⁹⁸ The motivation behind this sentiment is reflected by a letter from Governor Gilmore to Savannah Mayor William T. Williams in March 1830:

The slave holding states are a minority in the Union. The strongest prejudices are continually excited against us. The exercise of any authority in relation to our slaves tho its pretense may be to secure us from danger of insurrection might eventually lead to the assumption of legislative control over the whole subject and would most probably end in the loss of our rights of property and utter destruction of the present state of society.¹⁹⁹

Governor Gilmore and other southern politicians like reputable North Carolina politician Kenneth Rayner felt that any discussion of slavery and the expansion of slavery would bring slavery to possible legislation and disunion.²⁰⁰

Marxist and African American historian Herbert Aptheker would demonstrate 120 years after Walker that the latter had a legitimate complaint against the Southern Slaveholding establishment's media silence. Numerous examples of this are in the records of the South which Aptheker dug up. A Quaker named Anthony Benezet stated in 1773,

¹⁹⁸ Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's Appeal in Georgia," 310.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 312.

²⁰⁰ Gregg Cantrell, *Kenneth and John B. Rayner and the Limits of Southern Defense* (IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 35-37, 43.

I know it is the general opinion, that nothing ought to be published whereby the Negroes may be made acquainted with their own strength & apprehension of danger the whites are in from them, for this reason in every publication I have made, I have guarded against it, but I am persuaded this fear may be carried too far for it is certainly yet more dangerous to withhold from the generality of people the knowledge of danger they will be in, thro' a continued importation of Negro slaves.²⁰¹

A letter from a resident of Augusta Georgia on April 9, 1810 to a friend in Salem, Massachusetts, stated,

The letter from 'Captain James' is but a small part of the evidence of the disposition of the Blacks in this part of the country. The most vigorous measures are taking to defeat their infernal designs. May God preserve us from the fate of St. Domingo. The papers here will, for obvious reasons, observe a total silence on this business; and the mail being near closing, I can say no more on the subject at present.²⁰²

Aptheker also observed,

The Washington correspondent of the *New York Tribune* wrote on December 20 that the 'insurrectionary movement in Tennessee obtained more headway than is known to the public – important facts being suppressed in order to check the spread of the contagion and prevent the true condition of affairs from being understood elsewhere.' Next week the same correspondent stated that he had 'reliable information' of serious trouble in New Orleans leading to the hanging of twenty slaves, 'but the newspapers carefully refrain from any mention of the facts.' Indeed, the New Orleans *Picayune* of December 9 had itself admitted that it had 'refrained from publishing a great deal which we receive by the mails, going to show that there is a spirit of turbulence abroad in various quarters.' On December 23 it said the same thing about 'this very delicate subject;', but added that there had been unearthed plots for rebellion during the Christmas holidays 'in Kentucky, Arkansas and Tennessee, as well as in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas', and that recent events 'along the Cumberland river in Kentucky and Tennessee and the more recent affairs in Mississippi, approach very nearly to 'positive insurrection.'²⁰³

Aptheker commented on this silence that "it was a practice of the rulers of the South to censor news of slave unrest. Specific admissions and evidences of this are numerous."²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 40-42. Does not say when.

²⁰² Ibid., 245-46.

²⁰³ Ibid., 348.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 155.

Governor James Monroe of Virginia during the Gabriel Prosser rebellion told the Speakers of the General Assembly that during the first 24 hours he had “endeavored to give the affair as little importance as the measures necessary for defense would permit... hoped it would even pass unnoticed by the community.” According to Governor Monroe, the large nature of the plot and the fact the rebellion was not suppressed quickly made that unlikely.²⁰⁵ This censorship extended to such blatant yet comical methods of suppression of information as newspapers replacing the words slave and negroes with asterisks and stars.²⁰⁶ Aptheker stated,

...in any number of cases one finds admissions from southern newspapers that their coverage of this feature of current events was something other than complete, even if the matter were not of local origin. One sees such words or phrases as ‘we dislike to allude,’ ‘we have refined,’ ‘we forbear,’. As already noted, even these hints were sometimes absent and there was complete silence, so far as the press of the region was concerned.²⁰⁷

The author of this thesis also found difficulty in researching slave rebellions in South Carolina because of this media silence. For example, the only slave insurrectionary activities recorded in the “Winyam Intelligencer” of Georgetown, South Carolina, and the “Charleston Courier” of Charleston, South Carolina, from September to December of 1829, were arson activity which either resulted in escaped incendiaries or a single slave prosecuted (the dates chosen because September is when Walker’s pamphlet was first distributed). The “Winyam Intelligencer”, September 30, 1829 reported a fire in Charleston on September 25, 1829 in what the editor described as a “a most daring attempt was made night before last, to set fire to a house in Meeting, a little above

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 157.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 159.

Boundary street.”²⁰⁸ On November 18, 1829 Capt. Cuttino's house in Georgetown, along with some others, were burned.²⁰⁹ On November 27, 1829 the “Charleston Courier” reported that a great fire occurred at Camden which burned down twenty buildings, which was suspected to be the work of an incendiary.²¹⁰ In November 28, 1829 the same paper offered a \$1,500 reward by Capt. Cuttino in addition to a \$500 reward by the town council to the “citizens of Georgetown” for the incendiary who burned Capt. Cuttino’s house.²¹¹ On December 2, 1829, the “Winyam Intelligencer” reported a fire set by an incendiary in Camden, South Carolina²¹². On December 9 of 1829, the same paper mentioned a child was to be hung by the courts for setting fire to his master Capt. Cuttino’s house. Several other slaves were charged but let go afterwards.²¹³ The same paper briefly mentioned that the boy sentenced to death was named Charles.²¹⁴ These events were all the newspapers stated of slave insurrectionary activity from September to December of 1829. However, A Report of the Military Committee on the Petition of the Town Council of December 4, 1829 demonstrated a totally different feeling of the threat of insurrectionary activity in Georgetown, South Carolina. It stated that the Governor’s message and Town Council with consideration of “several papers committed to them”, have convinced the Committee that “the best interest of the state requires prompt and

²⁰⁸ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), September 30, 1829.

²⁰⁹ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), November 18, 1829.

²¹⁰ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), November 27, 1829. The “Charleston Courier” corroborated this fire in their paper.

²¹¹ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), November 28, 1829.

²¹² *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), December 2, 1829. The “Charleston Courier” corroborated this fire.

²¹³ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), December 9, 1829.

²¹⁴ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), December 12, 1829.

efficient legislation for the protection of this important section of [the] country.” The Chairman of the Committee, Wade Hampton Jr., stated,

The District of Georgetown from its (not legible) situation, and peculiar population, cannot but incite a deep interest in the bosom of every one. The late insurrectionary movements in that District, so well chosen in point of time have been happily frustrated, and we still have it in our power by timely legislation, to save and protect our brethren of Georgetown, from horrors, the [not legible] of which is too well calculated to which the most chilling [not legible].²¹⁵

The author in consideration of other minor examples of silence on slave insurrectionary activities in the newspapers and brief comments in government documents on that activity, finds it difficult at the least to believe there was not a deliberate effort to keep the Southern public unaware, as Aptheker asserted.

Walker’s solution to this silence was physical manifestations of their discontent in the form of slave rebellion. Southern efforts to stop the distribution of his pamphlet, slave resistance, and the consequent legislation in response to these slave rebellions would be evidence of a problem. For example, one of the laws which the South invoked in response to Walker’s *Appeal* was harsher measures of controlling black sailors such as the Negro Seamen Act. These measures detained black sailors while their ships were at a southern port. Professor Scriven commented on the laws to restrict black sailors’ movement, “it informed the international community of the nefarious plight that blacks suffered in America.”²¹⁶ Nevertheless, the myth behind slaves being satisfied with life under the slave institution, supported by media silence, remained a strong propaganda

²¹⁵ “Report of the Military Committee on the Petition of the Town Council” Georgetown, South Carolina.: South Carolina State Archives, December 4, 1829. Stack location 130F05, Box 62.

²¹⁶ Scriven, *A Dealer of Old Clothes: Philosophical Conversations with David Walker*, 7.

weapon up until the 20th century, as apologists for Southern slavery wrote books asserting this.

However, a historian named Herbert Aptheker would help to dispel this myth in his book *American Negro Slave Revolts*. Aptheker researched many archives across the South to accumulate a record of slave revolts. He came up with more than 300 slave plots and revolts. It is interesting to look at estimates of slave rebellions recorded in *American Negro Slave Revolts*. Aptheker's criteria for classifying events as slave rebellions or plots was narrower than Texas' definition of slave insurrections: "by 'insurrection of slaves' is meant, an assemblage of three or more, with arms, with intent to obtain their liberty by force." Instead, Aptheker's criterion was 10 slaves or more with freedom as a goal and contemporary references to the incident. He did not include outbreaks or plots on domestic and foreign slave traders.²¹⁷ Below is a statistical analysis of his findings. The criterion by the author of this thesis, in extracting the following statistical data from Aptheker's records, was that slave rebellions were counted only if actual hostilities broke out, slaves were found with a large amount of weapons, or in a large congregation with evidence of intended resistance. Plots were counted only if courts found guilty or executed slaves. Although Aptheker listed plots which sometimes involved the dropping of charges, not guilty verdicts, and vague, brief background information of plots as legitimate, these were omitted. In addition, slave rebellions and plots which seemed connected were occasionally counted as a single incident rather than multiple occurrences. The charts below are only estimations:

²¹⁷ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 162.

Chart 1: Slave Plots and Rebellions

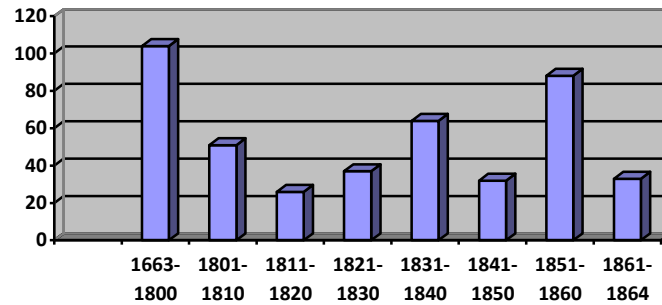
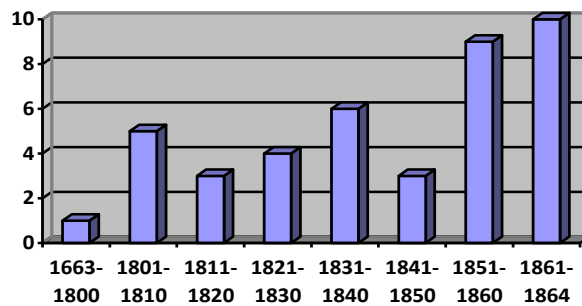


Chart 2: Slave Plots and Rebellions Per Year



The first graph demonstrates in ten-year periods that the number of plots and slave rebellions slowly progressed until in one ten year period which is 1851-1860, it reached over eighty which was a higher level of occurrences than any ten year period before. The second graph displays the number of slave plots and rebellions per year. As can be seen, the number of incidents of slave resistance over the years leading up to the Civil War increased with a four year period during the civil war between 1861 and 1864,

having more incidents of rebellion and slave plots per year than any previous period in history (eleven rebellions per year when the average for the previous ten-year increments were five per year). The graphs above support a statement in the *Standard* of Raleigh, North Carolina on February 5, 1861 that if a civil war occurred,

...the negroes will know, too, that the war is waged on their account. They will become restless and turbulent...strong governments will be established, and will bear heavily on the masses...the end will be – Abolition! There are other considerations touching slavery which we shall not refer to here, - every intelligent mind will at once understand us, and will weigh considerations itself.²¹⁸

Walker's advocacy of slave rebellions through the distribution of his pamphlet helped to allow a record for his people to be accurately depicted in history. As mentioned in the pamphlet section, Walker was enraged with the silence of the American media over the suffering of his people. Walker asked his audience to look at the efforts of the South to intercept his pamphlet and ask why. Aptheker asserted in his book that the proliferation of slave plots and revolts, and an increase of the level of organization, indicated slaves were anything but content with slavery. During the Civil War, when freedom for slaves came closer than ever before, the numbers indicate a significant rise in these overt acts by slaves. Walker's importance in African American historiography and the criticism he received for the advocacy of violence in his *Appeal* should raise the question of how would historians such as Aptheker prove with compelling evidence in the face of those who denied common sense and objectivity, that slaves were not satisfied under slavery, had violence not been employed?

²¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

Repression

Hasan Crockett once stated, “slave rebellious violence created a constant problem for Southern society, and the most common method of dealing with the problem was passing repressive laws.”²¹⁹ Walker’s attempt to distribute his pamphlet across the South seemed to be a deliberate effort to provoke a repressive response by the southern slaveholding establishment. Unintentionally or intentionally, Walker caused Southern governments to continue making the situation worse for themselves by their passing of indiscriminate measures on slaves and free blacks in response to slave rebellions and the distribution of incendiary pamphlets. Professor of Southern History William Scarborough at the University of Mississippi stated that as a direct result of Walker’s pamphlet, three southern states passed legislation making it illegal to teach slaves and free blacks how to read and write.²²⁰ Walker’s pamphlet contained passages which provoked free blacks to ask if they were as privileged and free in comparison to whites and slaves. Walker also declared that the free blacks’ ambitions and conditions would never be equal with whites without the abolition of slavery. In addition, Southerners felt that the free blacks were a potential threat to the institution of slavery and feared their involvement in slave insurrections even before Walker’s pamphlet and Turner’s Rebellion. It is a suspicion that free blacks became alienated from southern governments because of the latter’s indiscriminate measures passed. The South’s indiscriminate policies on slaves and free blacks could have compelled some of the latter to identify with the former more closely

²¹⁹ Crockett, “The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker’s Appeal in Georgia,” 309.

²²⁰ Scarborough, “Africans in America: Judgment Day,” Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i2984.html>. Professor Hinks also stated this was the response from the southern government.

while simultaneously causing the latter to be less willing to cooperate with white Southerners.

Historian David G. Marr observed in Viet-Nam the effects of indiscriminate repressive laws upon the general population in reaction to a few violent radicals during the Vietnamese's anti-colonial struggle,

It is important to understand what this meant since the message was lost on most French contemporaries and even to this day has been misinterpreted by most writers not familiar with the ethos of the period. In an objective sense, the violent actions of these men forced the French after 1885 to intrude more directly and comprehensively into the affairs of north and central Vietnam than was wise in a 'protectorate', exposing the fist of foreign de facto control down to the district level thereby undercutting the effectiveness of court and mandarin collaborators.²²¹

We see a similar pattern in the South's legislation to deter and reprimand slave rebellions. According to Hasan Crockett,

In Georgia, as in all the slave states, laws were passed depriving 'free' blacks their civil, social, and economic rights. They could not vote or testify against whites. In many cities, they could not be on the street after dark. All Southern states had miscegenation statutes. Many free blacks were denied entry into trades and professions. By 1818, in Georgia 'free negroes were forbidden to enter that State, and those in it were required to register each year. By 1827, a few years before David Walker's *Appeal* appeared in Georgia, there were literally thousands of state, county and local laws controlling the behavior of enslaved and free blacks. Nonetheless, evidence points to widespread, organized slave resistance.²²²

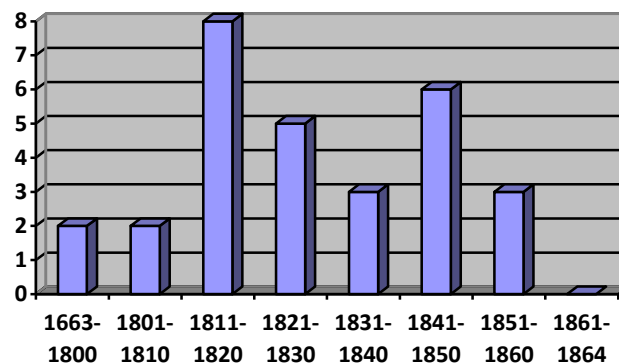
Free blacks could have been white "collaborators." However, just as Walker tried to convince the free blacks that their conditions would not improve as long as slavery existed, the South's indiscriminate repression on slaves and free blacks augmented

²²¹ David Marr, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism*, (n\Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1971) 44.

²²² Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's *Appeal* in Georgia," 308.

Walker's warnings. Walker also made many complaints of betrayal by his own people. What better way to stop this than to force the Southern governments to make themselves appear to be the enemy of slaves and the free black class. Whether the indiscriminate policies of the South did create the responses above by free blacks, it is clear from a statistical analysis of Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* that the South's fear of free black participation in rebellions was unfounded.

Chart 3: Percentage of Slave Plots and Rebellions Involving Free Blacks



The graph demonstrates that free black participation in slave plots and rebellions never exceeded 8 percent and averaged around 2 cases for ten year periods with oddly none being recorded for the civil war years. The graph does show an increase in free black participation, but at an amount that was negligible.

Many revolutionaries throughout history, such as Samuel Adams, have focused on provoking a government to show its tyrannical face. This involves causing that government to pass repressive and indiscriminate reprimands. Revolutionary Ernesto

“Che” Guevara stated that guerrilla struggle should leave oppressors no choice but to demonstrate their repressive behavior.²²³ William Burchett made the same observation of repression in Viet-Nam that “when the full history of struggle in Vietnam comes to be written and analyzed, it will reveal one of the clearest demonstrations of the principle that repression generates resistance, resistance in turn generates more repression, and then comes more resistance at a higher level and so on.”²²⁴ Further investigation needs to be made as to whether the South’s indiscriminate repression undercut the willingness and abilities of some free blacks to collaborate. The tragic implication of the data above shows there was no significant evidence to show legislation upon free blacks was warranted. This may have alienated a class of people who could have helped with stability rather than acquiesce, overtly support slave resistance, or provide discreet support for slave resistance. If this be true and can be supported with more evidence, then Walker did a very good job as an African American revolutionary.

Costs

Rebellions like Turner’s, which Walker sought to promote with his advocacy of violence, were expensive to the South. Walker used the story of Demetrius the Silversmith to assert that the concern for money was a motivation of the South’s silence

²²³ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 12-16.

²²⁴ Wilfred G. Burchett, *Vietnam Will Win*, 2nd ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 115. See also Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16. In El Salvador, the FMLN stated from their experience that “severe repression did not quell political mobilization but resulted in significant numbers of erstwhile protesters becoming guerrilla members or supporters, thereby deepening the conflict.”

and deception. Walker obviously thought rebellions would increase the financial costs to the South. Money would be used to repair effects of arson, theft, lost lives, resources used to battle and prevent slave revolts, resources used to intercept incendiary pamphlets, and resources to maintain and ensure repressive policies. For example one fire as a result of arson which was caught early in Charleston in September of 1829 took out several houses and cost sixty thousand dollars.²²⁵ Another fire set by an incendiary according to the same paper cost \$100,000 in damage.²²⁶ The “Charleston Courier” reported another fire in Camden, South Carolina on November 27, 1829 that cost \$100,000 in damages as well.²²⁷ T.E. Lawrence explained his victory over the Turks in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*,

...attack the enemy’s material, not the people. In other words, the plan was to convince the Turks they couldn’t stay, rather than to drive them out. Isolated posts and garrisons were attacked until Turks reinforced them, then no further attacks because the purpose was to stretch them out thin. These reinforced garrisons ate up their resources and it was necessary to lull them into a sense of security until they let their defenses down again.²²⁸

There are other examples which demonstrate how costly rebellions and insurgencies are to a government. The Algerian War cost the French an average of 3 million dollars a day for eight years.²²⁹ According to *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*,

²²⁵ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), September 30, 1829.

²²⁶ *The Winyam Intelligencer* (Georgetown, South Carolina), December 2, 1829.

²²⁷ *The Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), November 27, 1829.

²²⁸ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 4.

²²⁹ Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 221.

From 1981 to 1991, the United States gave El Salvador three billion dollars in economic aid. Instead of helping the economy grow, U.S. aid, used to repair all of the damage caused by the FMLN sabotage, was only enough to keep its economy in stasis.²³⁰

In addition to costs accrued from fighting rebellions and insurgencies, it was costly to maintain a military presence in the South to provide security and deter slave resistance. Herbert Aptheker stated about this Southern military presence,

Behind the state militias which, in the South were ‘fairly efficient’ armed bodies, in sharp contrast to the condition of the North. Moreover, as a measure of additional precaution and as a result of the prestige of the military profession in the South, numerous and well-armed voluntary organizations abounded. Finally, but by no means of at least importance, stood the armed might of the federal government, a large percentage of which was pledged, as the Constitution was then generally interpreted, to assist in suppressing servile unrest.²³¹

Frederick Olmsted also stated about his visit to Charleston,

Police machinery such as you never find in towns under free government: citadels, sentries, passports, grape-shotted cannon, and daily public whippings of the subjects for accidental infractions of public ceremonies. I happened myself to see more direct expression of tyranny in a single day and night in Charleston, than at Naples in a week; and I found that more than half of the inhabitants of this town were subject to arrest, imprisonment, and barbarous punishment, if found in the streets without a passport after the evening ‘gunfire.’ Similar precautions and similar customs may be discovered in every large town in the South...There is...nearly everywhere, [in the South] always prepared to act, if not always in service, an armed force, with a military organization, which is invested with more arbitrary and cruel power than any police in Europe.”²³²

Slave rebellions may never have come close to overthrowing Southern governments. However, the advocacy of violence did have returns for Walker’s people in creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity for whites. Worst, the sought after normalcy which humans prefer in life would be interrupted by occasional signs of discontent, signs which would threaten the existence of that society. More importantly,

²³⁰ Moroni Bracamonte, Jose Angel, and David E. Spencer, *"Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts."* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 29.

²³¹ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 67-68.

²³² Ibid., 69.

slave rebellions cost the government resources which could have been used toward other goals. Col. Harry Summers once told a North Vietnamese counterpart in 1975 that “you never defeated us in the battlefield” in which his counterpart replied that was correct yet “irrelevant.”²³³ Although these expenses in comparison to the profits from slavery may be negligible, slave rebellions would not allow the full application and cooperation of human resources in Southern society. Thuersam admitted himself that,

If, instead of promoting slave insurrection, those like Walker had encouraged the then-existing colonization society, the Southern voluntary manumission efforts, and a compensated emancipation similar to the later British method, our country would have experienced a far different middle-nineteenth century. With the final expenditure of nearly \$5 billion as the cost of the War Between the States, and the death of nearly one million Americans both North and South to decide the issue, one can view Walker’s radical and dangerous actions with better clarity. The money spent to field the two armies would have purchased the liberty of the 4 million slaves five times over.²³⁴

According to Herbert Aptheker, in his last annual message to Congress on December 3, 1860 President James Buchanan declared that the unrest of the slaves and the terror this produced were prime causes of the apparent collapse of the Union. He continued that efforts of territorial legislatures and of Congress to prevent the expansion of slavery and of northern people and their local governments to prevent the enforcement of the fugitive slave act were ‘evils’ which the South might have endured ‘without danger to the Union (as others have been) in the hope that time and reflection might apply the remedy.’

Buchanan went on,

²³³ Eliot Cohen; Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane, U.S. Army, Retired; Lieutenant Colonel Jan Horvath, U.S. Army; and Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, U.S. Army; “Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review: The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army*, published by the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Vol. LXXXVI, No. 2, (March-April 2006), 52.

²³⁴ Thuersam, “David Walker: Black Wilmington Abolitionist.” 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.cfhi.net/DavidWalkerBlackWilmingtonAbolitionist.php>.

...the immediate peril arises not so much from these causes as from the fact that the incessant and violent agitation of the slavery question throughout the North for the last quarter of a century has at length produced its malign influence on the slaves and inspired them with vague notions of freedom. Hence a sense of security no longer exists around the family altar. This feeling of peace at home has given place to apprehension of servile insurrections....Should this apprehension of domestic danger, whether real or imaginary, extend or intensify until it shall pervade the masses of the Southern people, then disunion will become inevitable.²³⁵

Conclusion

Walker's distribution of his incendiary pamphlet and advocacy of violent slave revolts was not a result of an ideology, but were tactics of combining threats of violence with appeals for co-existence. The unfair condemnation upon Walker's use of religion to advocate violence in comparison to other examples in US history and the conditions of blacks does not warrant the stigma of religious fanaticism. In addition, Walker wanted to prove that his people were "men" to the posterity of a founding father who believed that "force is law" in the evaluation of races. Moreover, Walker's advocacy of violence may have also had positive contributions to his people's struggle. It countered white America's media silence and Southern propaganda, it cost the South resources which could have been used toward other goals, and it caused enough fear amongst the Southern government that they overreacted by passing indiscriminate legislation which may have created a larger rift between Southern whites and free blacks.

Thuersam claimed that Walker's and Nat Turner's radical approaches toward abolition, referring to the use of religion to promote violence, were reckless and caused

²³⁵ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 38-39.

slavery to be prolonged because their actions stalled a budding voluntary manumission movement. In addition, Thuermer claimed that Southerners began to view free blacks with suspicion after Walker's pamphlet. However, as Hasan Crockett pointed out above, legislation against free blacks which demonstrated the fear and suspicion from whites of that class, existed before Walker. In addition, manumitted slaves were sent off to Africa through the American Colonization Society which raises the question of what would have been the results of allowing the American Colonization Society to continue its course. More importantly, the pre-1830s abolitionist movement had not accomplished much and it was violence in the Civil War, not a voluntary manumission movement, which ultimately ended slavery. A letter from an anonymous writer named V to "The Liberator", stated about Walker's pamphlet,

I have often heard, and constantly believed, that Walker's Appeal was the incoherent rhapsody of a blood-thirsty, but vulgar and very ignorant fanatic....I have now read the book and my opinions are changed...His want of fanaticism and want of education nevertheless do not affect the force of his argument, or the strength of his thoughts. There is a truth and boldness in what he advances, an honest indignation, and a powerful though homely eloquence in his manner...I am convinced that he was a brave, just, good man, endowed with talents of no mean order, deeply and properly persuaded of the wrongs of his race: one, in short, who would, had time and circumstances permitted, have been the apostle and champion of blacks.....It is vain to call him incendiary, ruffian, or exciter of sedition.²³⁶

²³⁶ William Lloyd Garrison. 2010. The Liberator Files. <http://www.theliberatorfiles.com/reference-to-discussions-of-walker/>. (accessed December 25, 2009). It is not understood why Garrison listed the want of education by Walker as something negative about the latter's pamphlet.

CHAPTER 3: DAVID'S STONE AND OLD NAT'S WAR

Introduction

Many past and recent scholars have spent a lot of time examining the question of how much Walker's pamphlet influenced Turner's Rebellion. They believed that Walker's *Appeal* directly influenced Turner because of the similarities of thought and the timing of Turner's Rebellion shortly after the distribution of Walker's pamphlet. As Professor Hinks stated, "...the impulse to create a direct connection between Nat Turner and David Walker has been so strong that commentators, even at the time of the Southampton revolt, could not resist it."²³⁷ Hinks continued, "later historians have continued to weigh the possibility that Walker may have influenced Turner."²³⁸ James Floyd, Virginia's governor during the time of Turner's Rebellion, discovered evidence such as letters from the North claiming this relationship existed, reports from law enforcement at the time, and other evidence to point to a connection. Governor Floyd went to his grave convinced of the relationship. Others such as Albert Bushnell Hart, Hilary A. Herbert, William Lloyd Garrison, and Benjamin Lundy all believed that Turner saw Walker's pamphlet.²³⁹ Author Vincent Harding endorsed this idea because of religious similarities.²⁴⁰ Professor Hinks stated his opinion that, "indeed, the *Appeal*

²³⁷ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 167.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

probably played such a critical role in the extensive conspiracy in Wilmington in September 1831.”²⁴¹

However, many have neglected the similarities in the manner both were condemned and marginalized in history. The definition of marginalization in this thesis means to relegate to an unimportant role by treating them as isolated events not part of broader trends in their society. Instead of examining the possibility of Walker influencing Turner, the Nat Turner insurrection provides a microcosm so that one may see that the response to David Walker was not an anomaly, but may have been a general reaction by the dominant class of the majority. A direct challenge to the American system made Walker, Turner, and many others like them in history radicals, resulting in marginalization by advocates of that system and an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon which those radicals represented. Purdue University Professor Darryl Scriven agreed with Walker’s marginalization that,

It is not a well-kept secret that radical and radically oppressed voices were and are systematically marginalized by much of the dominant scholarship that finds no immediate angle of appropriation for such voices.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Ibid., 168-169.

²⁴² Scriven, *A Dealer of Old Clothes*, 1.

August 1831

Nat Turner's rebellion in August of 1831 rocked the southern slave-holding states and sent waves through the North. His rebellion in Southampton, Virginia, involved around 70 slaves according to Virginian Governor James Floyd. Turner went from plantation to plantation, killing slave masters and their families, while heading toward the armory in Jerusalem, Virginia. At the end of the rebellion, Turner was caught by Benjamin Phipps and executed along with the rest of the surviving rebellious slaves. Thomas Gray subsequently released a short text of Turner's confession after an interview before execution.

Like Walker, Turner was marginalized by being labeled a religious fanatic. Author and historian F. Roy Johnson wrote a book in the middle 20th century titled *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*. It was an example of how authors after the Turner Rebellion began to stigmatize Turner with religious fanaticism. It began by delving into the early history of Nat Turner's birth and development. Johnson examined details of the influences on Turner's character starting from his upbringing when his father ran away, African Pagan influences from his mother, the "wild streak" his mother was known for, and the Christian influences upon Turner (even to the point of Turner baptizing a white man named Etheldred Brantley). Johnson referred to Turner in his book as a "Negro preacher fanatic."²⁴³ Many other authors claimed Turner was a fanatic as well. Kenneth S. Greenberg in *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory* stated about those

²⁴³ F. Roy Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection* (Murfreesboro, NC: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), 1.

of Turner's time and after who wrote of Turner that "most whites denounced Turner as a fanatic with a messianic complex..."²⁴⁴ Thomas Gray, William Styron, and William Drewry became the most prominent scholars on the Nat Turner Rebellion. Thomas Gray described Turner in his book *The Confessions of Nat Turner: The Leader of the Late Insurrection*, "he is a complete fanatic, or plays his part most admirably."²⁴⁵ William Styron who wrote a fictional account of Nat Turner's rebellion once stated to the New York Times about Turner, "One must remember that [Nat] is a religious fanatic."²⁴⁶ William S. Drewry described the Turner Rebellion as comprised of followers deluded by a "wild fanatical Baptist preacher."²⁴⁷

In addition, Walker's distribution of his pamphlet and Turner's Rebellion were marginalized by being presented as anomalous events without adequate comparison to similar ideas or actions in history. In other words, there was a lack of observation of Walker and Turner under the continuity of similar events in history. Johnson and others used the indiscriminate violence in Turner's Rebellion to support the claim that Turner was a religious fanatic. No one investigated thoroughly whether there were similar examples of indiscriminate violence in past slave revolts. Johnson stated that no one expected that the negative influences of "a combination of pagan and Christian

²⁴⁴ Greenberg, *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History*, 138.

²⁴⁵ Thomas Gray, *Confessions of Nat Turner: The Leader of the Late Insurrection*, (Southampton, VA: Lucas and Deaver, 1831), 16.

²⁴⁶ Stanley Kauffman, "The Hudson Review", Volume 20, No. 4. (Winter, 1967-1968), 676.

²⁴⁷ Greenberg, *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History*, 165.

impressions on the boy Nat would be reflected in his barbaric treatment of the whites.”²⁴⁸

Gray also stated,

It will thus appear, that whilst everything upon the surface of society wore a calm and peaceful aspect; whilst not one note of preparation was heard to warn the devoted inhabitants of woe and death, a gloomy fanatic was revolving in the recesses of his own dark, bewildered, and overwrought mind, schemes of indiscriminate massacre to the whites. ²⁴⁹

William S. Drewry also used Thomas Gray’s statement above, in his book, to assert that Turner was a religious fanatic.²⁵⁰ The judge who condemned Turner stated at his trial,

You have been convicted of plotting in cold blood, the indiscriminate destruction of men, of helpless women, and of infant children. The evidence before us leaves not a shadow of doubt, but that your hands were often imbrued in the blood of the innocent...your only justification is, that you were led away by fanaticism. ²⁵¹

Although author Scot French did not explicitly describe Turner as a fanatic, he stated in *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory* that “Turner and his followers displayed an indiscriminate brutality that placed them beyond the pale of civilization.”²⁵² John Williams’ criticism about William Styron’s fictional account of Turner’s Rebellion expressed what many authors overlooked, that “Styron sees the Turner episode as some isolated instance, not seeing it in the context of a history that included the Gabriel Prosser

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁹ Gray, *Confessions of Nat Turner: The Leader of the Late Insurrection*, 3.

²⁵⁰ William S. Drewry, *The Southampton Insurrection*, (Washington D.C.: Neale Co,1900), 112.

²⁵¹ Gray, *Confessions of Nat Turner: The Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton*, 19-20.

²⁵² Scot French, *The Rebellious Slaves. Nat Turner in American Memory*.(New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004), 129.

Conspiracy of 1800, the Denmark Vesey plot of 1822, and the reported slave plots of colonial New York.”²⁵³

Walker and Turner were also marginalized by a lack of consideration of the conditions. After Turner’s rebellion, slave states passed legislation preventing slaves and free blacks from reading, writing, and congregating for purposes of religious instruction. It is important to note that this type of legislation was already being passed before Walker’s pamphlet and Turner’s Rebellion. However, these aforementioned events increased the number of states which passed these laws and made those laws harsher. It is difficult to tell whether Walker’s pamphlet or Turner’s revolt had the most influence in the passing of this legislation because the authors on the subjects have not made this distinction. Nevertheless, some have cited Turner’s Rebellion as causing the General Assembly of Virginia prohibiting the teaching of slaves in 1831, North Carolina forbidding free blacks from preaching in 1831, and Alabama forbidding the teaching of slaves how to read and write in 1832.²⁵⁴ The conditions of slaves were ignored by these governments as causes of Turner’s Rebellion. Instead the ideology or ideas instilled in blacks were to blame according to the legislation passed by Southern states.

²⁵³ Herbert Shapiro *The Confessions of Nat Turner: William Styron and his Critics*. Negro American Literature. Vol. 9, No. 4, (Winter, 1975), Page 100.

²⁵⁴ Lewis, Rudolph. “Up from Slavery”. 2008. <http://www.nathanielturner.com/educationhistorynegro6.htm>. (accessed on December 25, 2009).

A Defense of Turner

While Turner's killing of women and children was used to condemn him as a religious fanatic, there was no examination of other rebellions preceding Turner's to question if Turner did step outside the norm of slave rebellions. It seems many slave rebellions including Turner's involved indiscriminate violence. In addition, Turner's Rebellion and others involved moments of compassion in choosing to be spare a certain few from their violence, which usually was initially ignored in the reporting of all of these rebellions by the dominant majority. Turner did not kill a white family near Lehi Waller's estate. A slave named Davy testified that Turner refused to kill them because "they thought no better of themselves than they did of the negroes."²⁵⁵ Although the Stono Rebellion of 1739 involved indiscriminate violence, the slave leader Jemmy, also showed compassion by letting one slaveholder by the name of Wallace live because he was a "good man and knew how to treat his slaves."²⁵⁶ In the Gabriel Prosser Rebellion, they decided to kill all whites except Frenchmen, Methodists, and Quakers.²⁵⁷ The impetus behind Gabriel Prosser's and the Stono Rebellions was not identified as religious fanaticism yet involved indiscriminate violence. One may be inclined to believe that Turner was labeled a religious fanatic because these aforementioned slave rebellions did not involve the use of religion to propagate these incidents. However, Denmark Vesey's plot and other slave rebellions did use religion to advocate violent slave rebellions. Vesey's plot intended to kill all whites and other slave rebellions actually did involve

²⁵⁵ Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*, 98.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 187-88.

²⁵⁷ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 101-102.

indiscriminate violence. Even clergymen in the American Revolution, as noted before, used religion to advocate violence. Yet none received the condemnation of “religious fanatic” as Turner and Walker did. Kenneth Greenberg stated, “Then, as now, ‘fanatic’ was synonymous with ‘maniac’ or ‘zealot’, and it bears noting that earlier white polemicists failed to apply similar epithets to earlier black rebels.”²⁵⁸ This pattern among many slave revolts needs to be investigated and compared to Turner’s, to establish if he stepped outside of the norm enough to condemn him as a religious fanatic. There also needs to be more investigation into why discrimination was used on certain circumstances in many of these rebellions. More also needs to be done investigating and comparing the dominant culture’s advocacy of violence with religion to blacks’. Using the heuristics of indiscriminate violence and advocacy of violence with religion are insufficient as premises for religious fanaticism in consideration of other historical examples.

In addition, many authors have overlooked the conditions of slaves and instead identified religious fanaticism or ideology as the driving force behind Turner’s advocacy of violence. Turner’s violence was indeed deplorable because of the innocent children and women killed. However, one must also remember that slaves were treated as animals or as Walker said, brutes. The pertinent question should be, could one expect Turner or any other slave to act differently under such circumstances? The point is that Turner’s actions were compared to what society held as proper compassion and behavior by a

²⁵⁸ Greenberg, *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History*, 135.

combatant in a struggle while denying the former the freedom and equality as the latter. This is an interesting philosophical question which should be asked. If one lived under the conditions of slaves or brutes, is it appropriate or fair to expect the same levels of humanity in his or her actions toward the rest of society? In other words, was it the influence of the conditions resulting from the institution of slavery at least as much as religious-pagan ideology, that produced Turner's actions?

A Gift of God Named Hannibal

As a result of marginalizing Turner's Rebellion by isolating it from previous events, there was a lack of investigation into signs which indicated it may have been more than just an anomalous revolt by a group of intoxicated slaves hoodwinked by a religious fanatic. Historian Herbert Aptheker agreed with this criticism when he stated,

...in researching a detailed study of Nat Turner's rebellion, I came to the conclusion that it was not an isolated incident, but the culmination of a series of slave conspiracies and revolts which had occurred in the immediate past. These antecedents had largely gone unreported and, apparently, uninvestigated, the result naturally being a poor focusing of the Turner rebellion, and an incomplete understanding of the events and trends which that outbreak evoked or accelerated.²⁵⁹

One example of an "incomplete understanding" of Turner's Rebellion was inattention to circumstantial evidence before the event which may have indicated it was a result of guerrilla struggle rather than a single incident. In other words, Turner's Rebellion may have been a series of incidents by guerrilla groups against the Southern government over

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 11.

a period of time until circumstances allowed Turner and his followers to challenge the Southern government directly. This may have involved coordination between Turner's group and other guerrillas in counties and states surrounding Southampton, Virginia. F. Roy Johnson mentioned in his book *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection* that "some Southampton County Negroes apparently did not understand fully the true nature of the Nat Turner insurrection. Surviving in the Negro lore to this day is the thought that 'Old Nat's War' was more or less a guerrilla affair." This Negro lore stated according to Johnson that "after a long time and many killings the 'white folks caught them and done away with them'. Several of the caves were pointed out to each new generation."²⁶⁰ The caves pointed out were in the forest where Nat Turner hid before the insurrection. No investigation by past and recent scholars has occurred on this possibility, nor has anyone taken this Negro Lore seriously. The author uses the term guerrilla struggle to describe a group of free blacks or/and slaves working to undermine the slave establishment using unorthodox methods of combat rather than whites' norm of direct conventional fighting. This guerrilla activity includes incidents of arson, assassinations, and other overt acts against the government or plantation owners that involved multiple occurrences. The author's definition of the norm of whites' conventional fighting is armed men marching in a line, exchanging fire in a disciplined and timed manner.

The period of slave activity before Turner's Rebellion and fear by whites demonstrated that there was a possibility that Turner's Rebellion may have been a result

²⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*, 167. Blacks of the area testified that the story of Nat Turner's Rebellion was passed onto generations as a guerrilla affair.

of an insurgency with the possibility of extensive coordination over states which reached its zenith in the form of Turner's Rebellion. Professor Hinks stated in reference to Wilmington, NC that "it was no surprise that the first reports of the Southampton rising [Nat Turner's Rebellion] immediately prompted speculation about whether the rebels 'were...connected with the desperados who harassed N. Carolina last year.'"²⁶¹ A Senate document from the 57th Congress, 2nd session, pertaining to Federal aid for Domestic Disturbances before Turner's Rebellion, expressed the fear that existed in the year of Turner's Rebellion,

The year 1831 was one of unusual uneasiness throughout the slaveholding section of the country, consequent upon an apprehended rising of the negroes. Early in the spring of that year strong and urgent representations were made to the War Department by the authorities of Louisiana that a revolt was threatened by the slaves, and the presence of a military force in New Orleans was necessary to the preservation of order and to allay the apprehensiveness of the people. To quiet these fears two companies of infantry were sent to that city and orders were given to neighboring posts to hold the troops in readiness for any emergency. Later in the same season similar reports of disorderly conduct upon the part of the slaves came from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, and in order that a disposable force might be available to afford protection to such parts of the country as might require it, the garrison at Fort Monroe (Virginia) was augmented by five companies drawn from the northern seaboard.²⁶²

The document expressed the eerie expectation of something awful about to occur amongst the slave population in various states surrounding Virginia. Legislation passed by states surrounding Virginia demonstrated the seriousness of this fear. In 1830, North Carolina and Louisiana passed laws against teaching slaves to read and write as a result of slave unrest. Between 1829 and 1831 Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina passed

²⁶¹ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 163-64.

²⁶² Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 290-91.

severe penalties for passing anti-slavery propaganda as well because of slave unrest.²⁶³ Some within the Congress of Kentucky went so far as to suggest a bill to abolish slavery.²⁶⁴ It is difficult to believe that enough fear could have arisen to provoke such legislation, without real cause. Governor James Floyd of Virginia believed in the latter; that the Turner Rebellion was an organized, planned, and coordinated effort on the part of slaves in various counties in Virginia with origins from the North. The apparent fear in counties in close proximity to Southampton, Virginia and in states surrounding Virginia around the period of Turner's Rebellion warrants the investigation if they were connected and involved guerrilla tactics. There were other suspicious incidents immediately preceding Turner's Rebellion to support this assertion as well. "Immediately upon being alerted to the Southampton Revolt", a slave in Prince George, Virginia, was tried and condemned on September 1, 1831 for sending communications to blacks 15 miles away in New Kent county.²⁶⁵ Thomas Borland wrote to Governor Stokes around the time of Turner's Rebellion that,

The insurrection was well known among the Negroes to be about to take place, & such intention communicated to a considerable distance;...the last Sunday (evening) in August was the day fixed on & named to black congregation [in or near Suffolk, Virginia in Nasemond Country] by a black preacher named Grimes, who told them, where they were to meet him, armed in the best manner possible, and after a funeral sermon he would preach, pass thro' the country as soldiers and destroy the whites.²⁶⁶

Other signs included a slave who made haste from his owner 15 miles Southwest of Murfreesboro, NC, with a forged pass to head to the Southampton uprising. Another man

²⁶³ Ibid., 291.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 292.

²⁶⁵ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 162.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 162-63.

dressed as a woman was found circulating information pertaining to the rebellion in Edenton, NC, about the time of Turner's Rebellion.²⁶⁷ Turner stated to Gray in his confessions that no one else was involved in the plot. However, Johnson stated that "Nat was so secretive that he told his Lieutenants only those things he considered necessary to his cause. Thus when these slaves were brought to trial they could provide no knowledge of the extent of the plot..."²⁶⁸ If Turner's Rebellion grew out of a guerrilla struggle, this type of coordination would not be a new phenomenon amongst slaves. As early as 1722 in Virginia, a report by Lt. Gov. Drysdale to the Council of Trade and Plantations in London stated that a slave conspiracy had involved slaves in two or three counties in coordination with each other.²⁶⁹

In addition, Johnson provided details which showed indications that Turner or cohorts may have had experience with guerrilla warfare. Just as every military has its rankings and positions in order to make it an efficient machine, Turner demonstrated a lesser level of organization. According to Johnson's book, Turner's friends Hark Travis, Nelson Williams, Sam Francis, and Henry Porter were Lieutenants. Johnson claimed that Hark was the muscle of the group calling him their "black Apollo", Nelson the "sorcerer", and Sam and Henry the "propagandists". Johnson also added that blacks referred to Nelson as "General" while Johnson himself referred to Nat Turner as "General" as well.²⁷⁰ Johnson added that sympathizers of Turner were seen wearing red

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 163.

²⁶⁸ Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*, 74.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 175-76.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 72-73.

handkerchiefs around their necks at his sermons.²⁷¹ This demonstrated planning into organization of the insurgents by Turner. These same red sashes would be found on Turner's insurgents later in the rebellion.²⁷² Johnson also mentioned that Turner decided to act after the eclipse of the sun. It was a great propaganda effect that considered the cultural beliefs of the people as Johnson stated "many people filled with fears from judgment day preachments became greatly alarmed."²⁷³ The "Newborn Sentinel" of New Born, North Carolina stated about this phenomenon, "it is related by Plutarch in the first year of the reign of Augustus, the sun's light was so faint and obscure that one might look steadily at it with the naked eye."²⁷⁴ These facts leave the questions of how much preparation occurred and where did Turner learn about the importance of organization and timing? Could he have learned through practice or from other guerrilla slaves who had experience?

Johnson also stated that Turner ran to the dense forests before his revolt and after a certain time elapsed, came back to the plantation to recruit, propagandize, and plan for rebellion. It is regular behavior of guerrillas to infiltrate a population, indoctrinate, and recruit fighters. Col. Mitchell Hazam in a thesis for the U.S. Army Industrial College of the Armed Forces stated that the Vietcong's infiltration into the regular population was necessary for activities of propagandizing, planning rebellion, recruiting, and all other

²⁷¹ Ibid., 76.

²⁷² Ibid., 82.

²⁷³ Ibid., 71.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 75.

activities that may need cooperation amongst a civilian population.²⁷⁵ It is not a coincidence that immediately after Turner's return from the forests, he began to plot and propagandize the people to form what would be rebellion later. Given the fact that it was a regular occurrence for slaves to run away from and return to the plantation, many Southerners may have misunderstood the return of a runaway slave as an expression of regret or inability to survive alone, instead of vindication against the slave owner in the form of guerrilla infiltration. More research needs to be done into signs of whether this misunderstanding did occur in Turner's case. Something occurred before or during his venture into the forests which influenced Turner to decide to have a rebellion. Inaccessible areas such as forests are good places for guerrillas which may have influenced him. Moreover, how long did Turner remain in the forests.? This leaves the question if Turner was absent from the plantation during a period of time when incidents, which could be construed as guerrilla activities, did occur in close proximity to the plantation Turner resided on in Southampton, Virginia.

The possibility of Turner's Rebellion resulting from a guerrilla affair which progressed to a conventional challenge to the Southern establishment is augmented with statistical analysis of Aptheker's record of slave plots and rebellions in *American Negro Slave Revolts* which indicate the twenty-year period of time before Turner's Rebellion had the highest activity of guerrilla incidents of any period of slavery. These statistics

²⁷⁵ Mitchell J. Hazam, Colonel, U.S. Army, "The Management of Logistical Support for Vietcong Operations." (MA, Thesis number 68), Industrial College of the Armed Forces, March 1965, 33-34. See also 22.

show actions of guerrilla activity slowly increased reaching its highest peak between 1811 and 1830 before Turner's Rebellion.

Chart 4: Percentage of Slave Plots and Rebellions Involving Guerrilla Activity

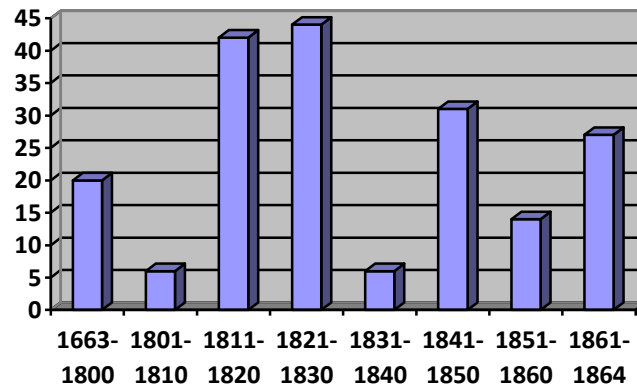
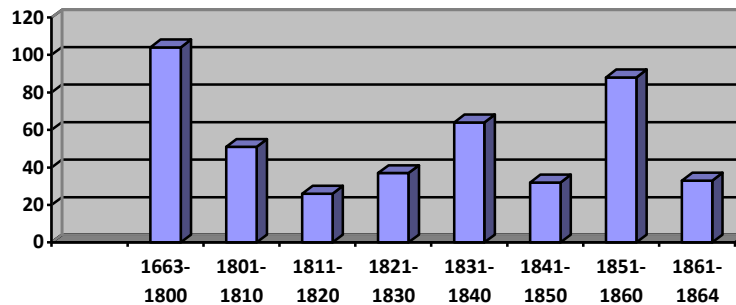


Chart 5: Slave Plots and Rebellions



In addition, as incidents of slave plots and rebellions increased in 1831-1840 and 1851-1860; guerrilla incidents decreased. As incidents of slave plots and rebellions decreased in 1811-1820, 1841-1850 and 1861-1864; guerrilla incidents increased. These numbers show a general rather than consistent theme that as slave plots and rebellions decreased, the number of guerrilla incidents increased and vice versa. This could be explained by the

Chinese revolutionary Mao ZeDong's dictum of guerrilla warfare where insurgents try their best to attack their opposition without direct confrontation which may leave them accepting heavy losses, then eventually changing from a guerrilla into a direct conventional challenge when the numbers and resources allow. The fears in surrounding counties of Southampton, Virginia and the surrounding states were possibly caused by these moments of guerrilla activity between 1811 and 1830 which resulted in the apogee of those efforts or the transitioning Mao spoke of in the form of Turner's Rebellion. Mao's description of the size of a guerrilla unit was, " they may be formed from an admixture of regular troops with groups of the people, or they may consist of regular army units intact. And mere quantity does not affect this matter. Such units may consist of a squad of a few men, a battalion of several hundred men, or a regiment of several thousand men."²⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that when Turner's men met the Virginia militia at Parker's field, they fought in a line in a conventional manner, exchanging fire, rather than avoiding direct confrontation. Turner's men won the initial volley as the Virginian militia retreated to a hill where they were reinforced by more numbers before winning the second exchange of fire against Turner's forces.²⁷⁷ Without further detailed observation and evidence of the relations of events in the surrounding counties and states of Southampton, Virginia before Turner's Rebellion and further investigation into more details of Turner's Rebellion, it remains only an interesting conjecture. However it does add onto the noted circumstantial evidence that Turner's Rebellion may have been a result of a guerrilla insurgency which led to a conventional challenge.

²⁷⁶ Mao Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 200) 44-45.

²⁷⁷ Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*, 99-101.

Turner's rebellion was not alone in having signs that it was a guerrilla affair with coordination between guerrillas of surrounding counties. Many scholars remember the Stono Rebellion for about a hundred slaves that headed for St. Augustine, Florida for freedom into the hands of the Spanish. However, in 1738, a year before the Stono rebellion, conditions in Charles Towne, South Carolina and other surrounding counties indicated that slaves, "singly or in groups" continued to try to get to St. Augustine. Aptheker described, before the rebellion, there were assassinations and outright confrontation. In 1739 immediately before the Stono Rebellion, Aptheker stated that "several plots and uprisings rocked the province of South Carolina." Then on September 9, 1739 the Stono Rebellion occurred on Stono River, South Carolina.²⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that the Stono River is about 10 miles from Charles Town which warrants the suspicion of the possibility of coordination between guerrilla groups. In addition, there were signs after slave plots and rebellions which shared similarities unexplored by scholars. For two years following Jemmy's Stono Rebellion, activities of a lesser but similar nature were reported. There was a conspiracy of 200 blacks in Charles Town which was brought down by a traitor. Near the end of the same year, a fire swept Charles Town. The following year, several more fires swept Charles Town, all attributed to slaves.²⁷⁹ Johnson also observed that there was an expansion of unrest by African Americans in the surrounding counties immediately after Gabriel Prosser's and Nat Turner's rebellions. There is also another similarity in many of the aforementioned slave revolts and plots. The slaves of the Stono Rebellion marched in a line with their own

²⁷⁸ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 186-87.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

homemade flag and drums beating. They fought in a conventional style as well. In the Gabriel Prosser Rebellion, Gabriel had intended to make a flag out of silk and march in a line.²⁸⁰ These similarities to the conventional method of fighting by whites' warrants a further examination of not only Turner's Rebellion, but other rebellions in the past to examine if they were a product of guerrilla activities that led to a conventional challenge to whites using similar methods of conventional warfare they learned from whites. It appears that the marginalization of Turner's Rebellion as an anomalous event may have not been a single response by the Southern slaveholding establishment but perhaps a general pattern of responses to many slave revolts.

The lack of a historiography of slave-guerrilla struggle in African American history is not a new phenomena but can be seen with other insurgencies in the world. Some of the causes are that counterinsurgent governments marginalize insurgent incidents and thoughts in order to protect the legitimacy of their government while destroying the legitimacy of the insurgent. What has resulted from this marginalization is an incomplete understanding if slave rebellions involved guerrilla warfare in its nascent stages, false assumptions of the resolution of these incidents after periods of unrest, and a lack of awareness by the public of its proliferation in events and organization over many years.

Carlos Fonseca Amador, leader and founder of the FSLN or Sandinistas in Nicaragua, researched and documented at least one example of popular resistance to the government every single year for more than a century from the creation of the US's

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 219-20.

Monroe Doctrine in 1823 to 1926 when Augusto Caesar Sandino's uprising began.²⁸¹ He also found that the U.S. Marines withdrew from Nicaragua in the beginning of 1933 after occupying the country off and on since 1912.²⁸² He felt the Nicaraguan people were unaware of these minor acts of resistance that received little media attention and that US Marines and the government they placed in power repeatedly made incorrect assumptions about the end of these moments of rebellion. Aptheker also made the observation that the slave governments of the South tended to think that after a period of slave violence subsided, the insurgent problem was resolved. However, the period after a period of subsided violence and suspected resolution of slave insurgency, involved a proliferation of events and more organization in slave revolts. Herbert Aptheker said, "the revolts tended to occur in bunches, or periods, and it is believed that reasons for this are the infectious quality of disaffections, the great excitement its discovery occasioned, the dislocation and turmoil its suppression meant, and the further acts of restriction and repression that invariably followed."²⁸³ Despite the media silence, a few southerners observed the same of slave rebellions in their accounts as well.²⁸⁴ The author shares the belief of Aptheker that the slave governments of the South misunderstood periods of rest by slaves as the end of slave resistance when in fact they were periods of rest after heavy casualties, reorganization, and slaves obtaining confidence in the ability to rebel. We can

²⁸¹ Matilde Zimmerman, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 151.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁸³ Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 100.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 48-49,. In 1825 a slaveholder stated, "...the tenure by which we hold our slaves, is daily becoming less secure." A Virginia slave owner and politician publicly noticed, "I wish I could maintain, with truth...that it was a small danger, but it is a great danger, it is a danger which has increased, is increasing, and must be diminished, or it must come to its regular catastrophe."

see a similarity in other insurgencies such as the Vietnamese struggle for independence. Author and historian Douglas Pike explained “anti-French feelings in Vietnam came in waves, each of greater height and force than the proceeding one.”²⁸⁵ Author Kuno Knoebl stated in reference to the Vietnam Conflict, “guerrilla wars can long lie dormant and then erupt again at a more advantageous moment, under more favorable conditions, for the guerrillas.”²⁸⁶

We do not need to go off the shores of America to view Aptheker’s observation. It may be occurring currently all over the United States’ slums, ghettoes, and projects. William C. Dunn, experienced counter-gang law enforcement officer and author of *The Gangs of Los Angeles*, wrote that overt acts of resistance by gangs which were not receiving enough attention in the media were signs of something worse coming in the near future. Dunn warned,

What the average person doesn’t understand is the gang problem is slowly encircling them. There is a rapidly enlarging segment of our civilization which is spinning out of control, that can’t keep their minds right, and if we don’t reel them in, we’re all in for an ultra violent future, one that will affect us all; even those who think they have enough money and riches to live above and beyond it all. Because eventually there will be no escape. Although a few major cities, Los Angeles included, have experienced a decline in gang population, mainly due to decreased housing prices, the nationwide gang population is growing exponentially each year. We are currently on course for a gang culture that could explode into insurrection in this country. It is a very real possibility.²⁸⁷

Dunn continued that despite state governments’ claims of resolving the gang problem in their states in the past, gangs were becoming more organized, acts of resistance were

²⁸⁵ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), 16.

²⁸⁶ Kuno Knoebl, *Victor Charlie: The Face of War in Vietnam*, trans. Abe Farbstein (New York: Praeger, 1967), 303-04.

²⁸⁷ William Dunn, *The Gangs of Los Angeles* (n.p.: iUniverse Inc., 2007), 262-63.

proliferating, and that a culture of its own was forming among gangs unnoticed by the public.

Conclusion

Turner's Rebellion is relevant to Walker's pamphlet not only because Walker may have influenced Turner, but because they are examples of how two African American radicals were marginalized in similar ways by the American establishment. In both examples the emphasis on dangerous ideologies or fanaticism was an effort by advocates of the establishment to divert attention away from the conditions of Walker's and Turner's people. In addition, there was a lack of continuity as Walker and Turner were presented in history as anomalous events. In other words, there was a poor focus or incomplete picture painted by neglecting comparisons with relevant examples preceding and following Walker's and Turner's time. It is clear that the American establishment and its advocates, then and now, react with marginalization when rhetoric or violence is employed to directly challenge the American system. We see another example of this in novels from the African American struggle. In the story by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, a slave revolutionary fought against slavery with violence and hid in swamps full of guerrilla fighters. This story was not as popular as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which has been scrutinized by African American historians as being a too passive story of African American struggle against slavery, yet became one of the most popular books of its time. The latter book made Uncle Tom a martyr and supported

the American Colonization scheme. This general pattern of marginalization by the dominant majority has caused the unfortunate circumstance where aspects of revolutionary thoughts such as Walker's and slave rebellions such as Turner's, in the African American struggle, to be ignored, omitted, and possibly a misunderstood lesson for all of us. We also see that this marginalization not only occurred in America but in other insurgencies in the world and possible insurgencies of today in America's slums, projects, and ghettos. The American establishment's habit of attaching the suffix "ism" to a word to marginalize an opposition goes from "terrorism" past "communism" and "fascism", to "fanaticism" in the African American struggle. Walker once predicted that, "Beloved brethren--here let me tell you, and believe it, that the Lord our God, as true as he sits on his throne in heaven, and as true as our Savior died to redeem the world, will give you a Hannibal", it was unexpected by the slaveholding establishment that it would come in the form of a "gift of God" which was the Christian interpretation of Nat Turner's first name.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Johnson, *The Nat Turner Slave Insurrection*, 13.

EPILOGUE

Walker's provocative diatribe created a huge earthquake upon the ground of abolition and slavery. Professor Peter P. Hinks stated on the importance of Walker's pamphlet, "nothing even vaguely resembling this vehement manifesto had ever been published before, and its boldness heralded a new and confident movement among blacks to end slavery and discrimination."²⁸⁹ Walker, like Thomas Paine, tackled the challenge of many revolutionaries. This challenge is clear in a statement by an old peasant leader in South Viet-Nam during the 1970s, who told British journalist and author Richard Gott that "it was not too difficult to make the population understand that they were being exploited. The problem was to persuade the peasants to struggle."²⁹⁰ If Turner did not read Walker's pamphlet, at least some of the complaints Walker mentioned may have been the impetus behind Turner's actions. Nevertheless, the accusation and stigma of religious fanaticism needs further investigation. In slight disagreement with Professor Hinks' observation that Walker was influenced by Denmark Vesey, in examining Walker's use of religion to support violence, we see that the origin of these thoughts had antecedents that reached as far back as the American Revolution; the same may be said of Turner. We also see that the conventional manner in which slaves fought in certain rebellions, specifically the ones which were large enough to be recorded as major revolts, were similar to whites'. Moreover, we see that the response of silence and marginalization by the dominant majority may have been a general response to direct

²⁸⁹ Hinks, *Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, xli.

²⁹⁰ The Editors of Ramparts with Banning Garrett and Katherine Berkley, *Two, Three...Many Vietnams* (San Francisco, CA: Canfield Press, 1971), 53.

challenges to the American system. Therefore, understanding the phenomena which Walker and Turner represented cannot be concluded without investigation into aspects lost by the dominant culture's silence and marginalization.

Instead of viewing Walker and Turner as anomalous events by blacks, more needs to be done in understanding their thoughts and actions in consideration of the influences of the white majority and within the continuity of the development of the African American struggle for equality and freedom in America. Since the 1960's, this problem was remedied by the divergence of history into ethnic and gender fields. Although this provides justice to the marginalized and silenced voice of those who represent these fields, it deters lessons which could be learned by all Americans if amalgamated into one field of study. In order to allow a re-integration of historical perspective, there still remains the challenge of shedding the marginalization that radicals such as Walker, Turner, and many more have suffered. Participants of the American Revolution and other moments have not received as much scrutiny as Walker and Turner, which needs to be corrected to avoid the assumption that the winners write history. The presentation of radicals as anomalous events without comparisons to similar examples before and after to dislocate continuity, a lack of consideration of the conditions of the weaker and how that weaker perceived their conditions, the use of abstract terms to marginalize and confuse researchers, and most importantly the reasons constituents of a weaker culture may feel compelled to challenge an establishment needs to be observed by the dominant culture. Until that happens, we will continue to need minority history and there will continue to be unlearned lessons we as a whole will overlook. This thesis has pointed out a few of

those in Walker's and Turner's cases. There are probably more victims from the past and now.

British journalist Richard Gott explained in an observation of the Vietnamese Revolution,

...revolutions are not like ripe fruit on trees to be plucked by a passing guerrilla fighter. They mature slowly over centuries and ripen in the fierce heat of famine, plague, war, and economic disaster. We tend to see the victory over guerrillas in the Philippines and Malaya as being due to the skill of counter-guerrilla forces. It may equally have arisen from a lack of revolutionary content in the social and economic situation of these countries. This is the lesson that should be learned from Vietnam.²⁹¹

Our founding father John Adams stated about the American Revolution,

..what do we mean by the Revolution? The War. That was no part of the Revolution, it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people. And this was affected from 1760-1775 in the course of 15 years before a drop of blood was drawn at Lexington.²⁹²

Likewise, many of the thoughts which Walker expounded upon arose in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s such as equal education, employment, protection, and rights; one American identity with whites and blacks as integrated in society, the challenge against the American media silence upon the suffering of blacks, a desire for unity and expression of pride in that cultural identity, and the struggle between the application of violence and non-violence within a movement. Perhaps a revolution may be expressed in actions, but the seed and growth of the motivations may lie dormant for

²⁹¹ Ibid., 61.

²⁹² Marc Aronson. *The Real Revolution: The Global Story of American Independence*. (New York: Clarion Books, 2005). Xvi.

longer than historians have realized. This is precisely the reasoning behind the two preceding quotes. Many African Americans have identified Walker as that seed, such as Frederick Douglass, who in 1883 commented on Walker,

The question is sometimes asked, when, where and by whom the Negro was first suspected of having any rights at all? In answer to this inquiry it has been asserted that William Lloyd Garrison originated the Anti-slavery movement, that until his voice was raised against the American slave system, the whole world was silent. With all respect to those who make this claim I am compelled to dissent from it. I love and venerate the memory of William Lloyd Garrison....[Yet] it is no disparagement to him to affirm that he was preceded by many other good men whom it would be a pleasure to remember on occasions like this. Benjamin Lundy, a humble Quaker, though not the originator of the Anti-slavery movement, was in advance of Mr. Garrison. Walker, a colored man, whose appeal against slavery startled the land like a trump of coming judgment, was before Mr. Garrison or Mr. Lundy.²⁹³

However, it is clear that Walker only watered a seed which originated in the American Revolution.

Some may state that the promoters of violence such as Walker, Malcolm X, and others were a minority because violence did not become a considerable manifestation in the movements they represented. However, resorting to violence is a difficult decision for anyone to risk death over. In addition, this observation overlooks the effects of the thoughts on the people that movement represented. Samuel Adams once stated, “it does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people's minds.”²⁹⁴ Excluding the importance of the preceding individuals because the majority of the people did not resort to violence does not embrace the valuable lesson which this quote intended to dispel upon its posterity, the fact that the

²⁹³ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 114-15.

²⁹⁴ “Samuel Adams Quotes,” Brainy Quotes, Retrieved from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/samuel_adams.html (accessed December 25, 1009).

American Revolution was made possible by a minority of the population just as the Civil Rights Movement because of what was lingering in a minority's minds.

While much time has been spent on Walker's influence on Turner's Rebellion and examining his use of religion and violence, his attack on America's symbolism was an important and overlooked theme. Walker threatened violence and used pleas to America's morality, while simultaneously indicting and challenging the symbolism of America. Republicanism was the legitimacy of America portrayed abroad to the rest of the world, in essence this ideology was a symbol of America as well and in Walker's view Republicanism or America had allowed the suffering of his people. Just as Demetrius the Silversmith attempted to protect the symbolism of the statue of Diana and consequent accrued income for the town of Ephesus from the rest of Asia, Walker attacked the symbolism of Republicanism going so far as to attack one of the most important symbols of its origin, Thomas Jefferson. What made Walker so controversial was that he went to such length to purposely provoke a reaction that he attacked the religious, economic, and political traits of America. Traits of Republicanism which made America a symbol of freedom and the future to the world.

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